00023143

00023143

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

The Life of Field-Marshal
Sir George White, V.C.

Gros White.

The Life of Field-Marshal

Sir George White, V.C.

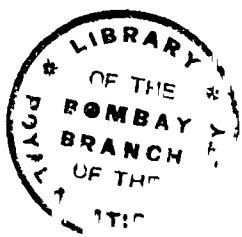
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., G.C.I.E.,
O.M., D.C.L., LL.D.

4162 23143

BY

SIR MORTIMER DURAND

VOLUME I.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London
1915

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

23143

PREFACE.

At the request of Sir George White's family I have written this account of his life and services.

The work was undertaken with some reluctance, for I felt that no one but a soldier could do it as it should be done; but when I received from Lord Roberts a letter saying he wished I would accept the proposal, which he had himself suggested, I decided to do so.

I never knew White very intimately, for he was some fifteen years older than I was; but our lives touched at many points from the time we first met in India, forty years ago, until we found ourselves together in Spain, when he was Governor of Gibraltar and I was British Ambassador at Madrid. I had therefore some personal knowledge of his services and character.

Talking over them one day with Lord Roberts, after a morning spent in reading the letters which he had placed at my disposal, I said that what had

always struck me as White's leading characteristic was his chivalry. Lord Roberts answered: "I entirely agree. He was one of the most chivalrous men I ever knew."

This memoir was nearly finished before the outbreak of war last year, but was then for a time laid by. It is now published in the hope that although the gigantic conflict of to-day has dwarfed all former wars, the story of a good soldier's life may yet be of some interest and service to his countrymen.

I wish to acknowledge with thanks the assistance given to me by those who have contributed letters and information. I am specially indebted to Lord Roberts, Miss Margaret Warrender, Miss Eleanor Sellar, Mrs N. Cohen, General Sir John Dunne, Captain Harry Brooke, the Rev. W. Prosser, Mr Edward Clodd, Mr H. W. Nicholls, and Lord Lansdowne, all of whom sent me letters or helped me in other ways. Lady White sorted out for me a great number of diaries and other papers in her possession, and Miss White gave me much help in dealing with them.

His Majesty the King has graciously permitted me to make use of some telegrams sent to Lord Lansdowne and Sir George White by Queen Victoria.

The page maps and plans in this book are not intended for military students, who can find detailed maps and plans in military histories; but

are meant only to give to general readers a bird's-eye view of some countries and localities with which White was connected.

The spelling of Indian and other non-English names is always a difficulty. A biographer has, I think, no right to tamper with the spelling of names in old letters, though it may be out of date, and can hardly be followed in the body of the book. Therefore different spellings of the same name will be found. Nevertheless, while dropping from the body of the book some obsolete forms, I have not attempted to adhere strictly to any scientific modern system, as I found this led to obscurity and other complications.

H. M. DURAND.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE WHITES OF WHITEHALL	1
II.	CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE	10
III.	FIRST YEAR OF SERVICE	21
IV.	VOYAGE TO INDIA: 1854-1855	25
V.	SIALKOT: 1855-1857	38
VI.	THE MUTINY: 1857-1860	49
VII.	THE PUNJAB: 1857-1858	69
VIII.	UMBALLA: 1858-1861	77
IX.	ON LEAVE—RETURN TO INDIA: 1860-1868	98
X.	SECOND TERM OF INDIAN SERVICE: 1868-1871	109
XI.	PROMOTION—AND MARRIAGE: 1871-1874	124
XII.	MULTAN—SIMLA—SITAPUR: 1875-1878	134
XIII.	AFGHANISTAN: 1879	160
XIV.	CHARASIA: 1879	186
XV.	KABUL: 1879	206
XVI.	THE SIEGE OF SHERPUR: 1879	231
XVII.	WHITE AS MILITARY SECRETARY: 1880-1881	244
XVIII.	COMMAND OF THE 92ND: 1881-1885	278

XIX. IN THE SUDAN: 1885 287
XX. RETURN TO INDIA—THE BURMESE WAR: 1885 . . 305
XXI. PACIFICATION OF BURMA: 1886-1888 . . . 338
XXII. WHITE'S TRANSFER TO QUETTA: 1888-1889 . . 370
XXIII. BELUCHISTAN: 1889-1892 380
XXIV. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA: 1893-1898 . . 410

ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOLUME I.

LIEUT.-COLONEL G. S. WHITE, V.C., C.B., 92ND GORDON HIGHLANDERS . . . . . *Frontispiece*

WHITEHALL . . . . . *To face page* 4

ROCK CASTLE, THE BIRTHPLACE OF SIR GEORGE WHITE " 10

GEORGE WHITE AS A YOUNG MAN . . . " 18
From a Daguerrotype.

LADY WHITE . . . . . " 130

SIR CHARLES BERNARD, K.C.S.I. . . . " 324

COLONEL SIR ROBERT SANDEMAN, K.C.S.I. . . " 382
From a painting by the Hon. John Collier. Reproduced by permission of Mr John Murray from 'The Life of Sir Robert Sandeman.'

LIST OF MAPS.

THE INDIAN EMPIRE . . . . . *To face page* 35

AFGHANISTAN AND THE N.W. FRONTIER . . " 158

CHARASIA, OCTOBER 6, 1879 . . . . " 194

BURMA . . . . . " 308

The Life of
Field-Marshal Sir George White.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHITES OF WHITEHALL.

AMONG the papers handed over to me for the preparation of this memoir is a short manuscript history of the White family, signed "Victoria White, Whitehall, September 1829."

According to the writer of this paper, the family, though long settled in Ireland, was of English extraction. In the reign of Charles the First the Whites owned considerable property in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and their home was a place called Hudson Hall. During the Civil War they threw in their lot with the King, on whose behalf they raised and maintained, at their own expense, a troop of dragoons. When the King's cause was lost they were involved in its ruin; and one of the family, Fulke White, or Whyte, for so he spelt his name, took refuge in Ireland.

Apparently he settled in the town of Antrim, in Ulster, where he maintained himself for many years by "teaching a classical school"; but in 1687, being then a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church, he was invited by the Presbyterians of Broughshane, a village in the valley of the Braid, to become their minister.

According to the records of the Synod of Ulster the congregation were not altogether easy to please. Though very anxious that "the place might be planted with a minister," they had not accepted White too readily. After he had preached to them for five Sabbaths their judgment had been that "they have a good liking of Mr Fulk Whyte as to his ministerial qualifications, but fear his body will not answer their necessity." Moreover they do not seem to have flocked to his teaching, for another entry in the records is to the effect that "Mr Fulk Whyte having no schollars come to him quits any hope of a Philosophy School." On the other hand, the minister who had held the charge for many years, Mr Douglas, was not popular, some of the congregation leaving their share of his salary unpaid, and one of them roundly declaring that "he would rather be in hell than hear Mr Douglas preach in the pulpit of Braid."

So, after the "tedious affair" had dragged on for years, in the course of which the unfortunate Mr Douglas had died, his widow seems to have received five pounds "out of the remainder of the collection made for persons among the Turks," and White was duly ordained, on a stipend of £30 a year and twenty bolls of oats, to be paid by his

parishioners "when any victuall comes into their hand."

At this time Ulster had suffered from many years of devastating strife, and was about to pass through her greatest ordeal. James the Second was on the throne; Ireland was being handed over to the Roman Catholics; and the English and Scotch Protestants, who two generations before had been deliberately settled in the country to hold it for the Crown, seemed to be on the point of complete subjection. It is true that the fortified cities of Londonderry, Coleraine, and Enniskillen were still in Protestant hands, and that a considerable number of Protestant gentry and farmers remained in possession of their lands and castles; but the military power was on the other side. A large force of Catholic troops, perhaps 40,000 men, had been raised and brought into shape by Irish and French officers, trained in the wars of the Continent; and against this force it seemed improbable that the local levies of the Protestants could hope to make head.

Yet for a time they did so, and when William of Orange landed in England in December 1688 the position was not materially changed. In the following spring the Royal troops marched against Londonderry and besieged it. Every one knows the story of the famous siege, how the garrison held out for 105 days, until their numbers were reduced from 7000 to 3000, and how they were eventually relieved by the dramatic destruction of the Foyle boom. Almost simultaneously the Enniskillen men routed the "Papists"

with great loss at Newtown Butler. For the time Ulster had thrown back her enemies and was free.

Considering that Fulke White's family had fought for King Charles, it is perhaps at first sight a little surprising to find him now taking part against the king *de jure*—James the Second. But Fulke White had been long enough in Ireland to become imbued with the feeling of the Northern Protestants, as is shown by his becoming a Presbyterian minister. Also he had seen the suffering which resulted from the Catholic domination. So Fulke White was one of a deputation of Presbyterian ministers who presented an address to William the Third when he landed at Carrickfergus on the 14th June 1690, before the Battle of the Boyne.

Fulke White lived until 1716. Before his death he had acquired a small property in the townland of Coreen, about a mile from Broughshane, and had built himself a house, which he named Whitehall. This house still stands, and is the home of the family. It is, in spite of its rather imposing name, an unpretentious house, with no very striking features, architectural or other. But it stands among beautiful surroundings, and the grounds bear witness to the loving care of successive generations. Through the fine trees to the west one gets a picturesque view of Slemish, the "mountain" upon which St Patrick herded his master's sheep when he was a slave.

Fulke White had two sons, both of whom became Presbyterian ministers. The eldest son, James, succeeded his father at Broughshane, and also at White-

Whitehall.

hall. The world seems to have gone well with him, for not only did he add some acres to the Whitehall lands, but by his marriage with Jane McCollum of Linnalarry he acquired considerable property on the north-east coast of Ireland, and in the glens of Antrim. This property was one-half of an estate owned by his wife's nephew, Hugh McCollum. The other half went to her only sister, who had married a Lecky of County Derry. It is said that the two families tossed for choice of shares, and that the Leckys won the toss and chose the land near Portrush, which they now own, including the Giant's Causeway.

James White died in 1761, and was buried beside his father in the kirkyard at Broughshane.

James White's descendants continued to live at Whitehall, and to prosper. His grandson, another James White, was Deputy Governor of the County Antrim in 1793, and as such commanded the Militia. He seems to have been much liked by the country folk. During the rebellion of 1798, the "turn out" as it is indulgently called in those parts, the local rebels marched to Whitehall, and called upon James White to lead them to the neighbouring town of Ballymena, where some loyalists were besieged. According to the family tradition he refused, saying, "I have carried the King's standard, and I'll never carry the standard of rebellion." Upon this one of the rebels called out, "Put a pike into him," but was indignantly silenced by the others: "Ye'll no hurt a hair of his heid." Nevertheless he was made a prisoner and obliged to

march with the rebels to Ballymena, having agreed to act in some way as an intermediary between them and the loyalists. Arrived at Ballymena, James White went forward to parley with the loyalists, who were shut up in the town-hall. While he was doing so the rebels made a rush, and the loyalists fired on them, with the result that James White was wounded, whether accidentally or not I cannot say. It is not known in what circumstances he returned to Whitehall; but his butler, who had joined the rebels, came back after an absence of some days, hid his pike in an outhouse, and quietly resumed his duties, no questions being asked.

Before his death in 1809 James White seems to have left the Presbyterians and joined the Church of England, to which his descendants have since belonged, though they have continued to be buried in the kirkyard at Broughshane. His daughter, the Victoria White already mentioned, writes of him that he was very proud of his family, and that when she was a child he used to spend hours talking to her about it. "I acquired a taste then for tracing families which I have never lost." Accordingly, the memorandum which she wrote for her "nieces and nephews yet unborn" is full of details about the families with whom the Whites intermarried. Most of these were of Scottish descent—McCollums and Hamiltons and Drummonds and Stuarts—"and of course," as she says about one of them, "claimed great antiquity." Among them were some who asserted their kinship with illustrious houses, the house of Abercorn for

example, and the royal house of Stuart, and the Bruces. Victoria White tells of her forebears with unfeigned pleasure, but her quaintly-written paper closes with these words: "Yet I would not foster family pride, in our case it would be absurd to think of such a thing—all we can talk of is dust and ashes —the name too we bear is an ignoble one, but it is a fair one, and it should often be repeated to the younger branches what I heard said of my Father on the memorable 7th of June 1798: 'You may take his word, a White was never known to tell a lie.'"

James White's son, John White, is still remembered as "the ould Captain." He was the first of the family to serve in the army. With his regiment, the 36th Foot, he was in Whitelock's unfortunate expedition to Buenos Ayres, and also fought at Corunna. It is said in Broughshane, with reference to him, that "the ould Whites were quare people," but the word queer has a double sense in those parts, and often implies quite as much admiration as criticism. In point of fact the Whites of that day seem to have been people of marked character. They were known throughout the countryside for their physical courage and dash; but in some cases were socially wild and shy, afflicted by an extreme sensitiveness which marred their success in life.

For example, the old Captain's brother and successor at Whitehall, yet another James White, though called to the Bar and generally known in Broughshane as "the Councillor," was constitutionally unable to face the Courts. According to one story, a solicitor,

who thought he had found in White the makings of a brilliant advocate, sent him his first brief; but the brief was returned with a letter from the young barrister saying that he could not take the responsibility. According to another story, James White did once summon up courage to plead, but was so much disturbed at being told by the Judge to speak up, that he never could bring himself to repeat the attempt. Yet it is related of him that one night, when very old, he alarmed his sons by the reckless speed at which he drove a car over a wild mountain road, in a thunderstorm and a downpour of rain. They dared not interfere, until at last he suggested that it would be well for them to keep a look-out, as he could neither see nor hear.

It is not easy to disentangle these Scottish families of North Ireland. For instance, James White's mother was Jane Stuart, from a younger branch of the Castle Stuart family, and he himself married Frances Stuart of Duneaghy, Co. Tyrone, whose mother was a Stewart of Killymoon.

It would be interesting to know more about Frances Stuart, for one of her sons is the subject of this memoir, but little definite information about her is to be obtained. She seems to have been much more sociably disposed than her husband's people, and to have won the respect and affection of all about her. But no picture of her is known to exist, and time has obliterated the details of her life and character. All that can be said is that James White and his wife, for a short time after their marriage, lived at Whitehall

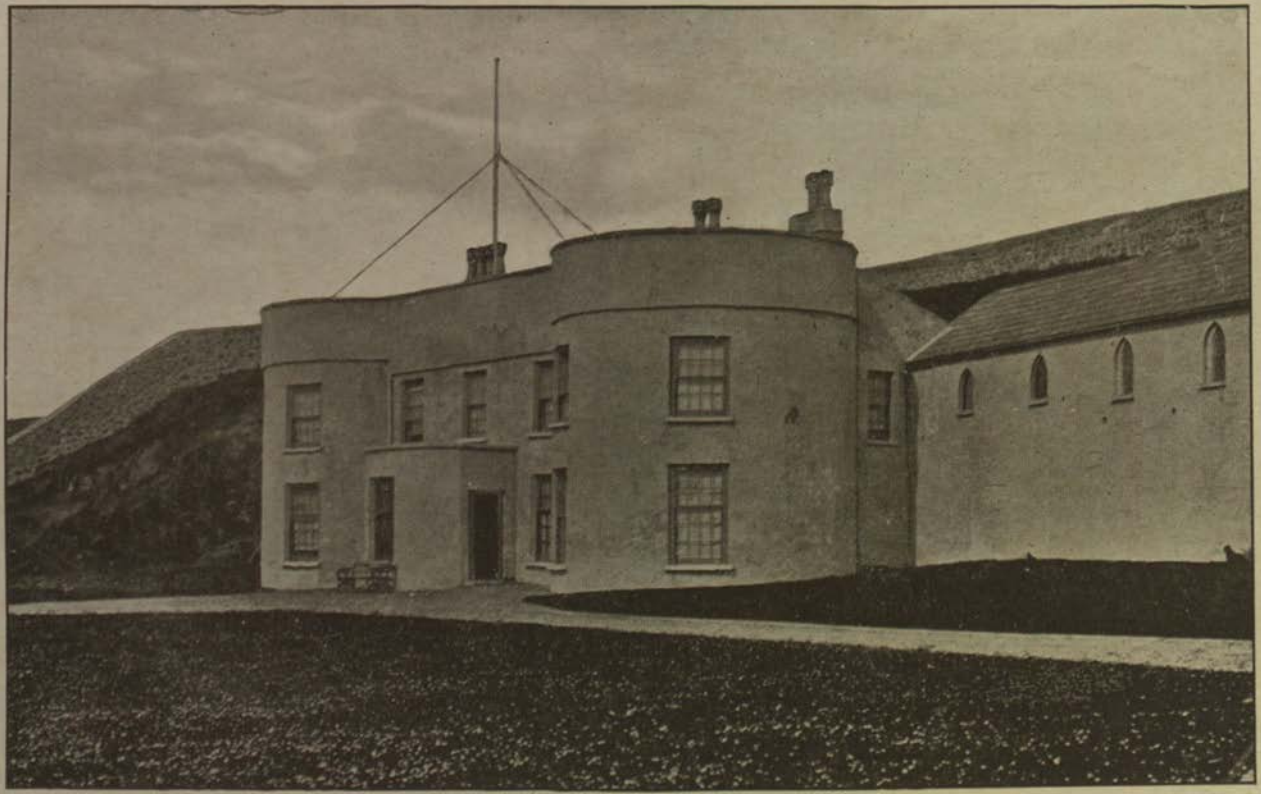
with his brother the "ould Captain" and two sisters, one of whom was Victoria, the writer of the family history. After that James White occupied in succession several houses, mostly in Antrim, and his wife bore him nine children. The second son, George Stuart, was born on the 6th of July 1835.

CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE.

Rock Castle, where George White was born, is a small house on the sea-shore, near the fishing village of Port Stewart. Here the boy spent the first few years of his life, but the only fact remaining on record about them is that the local doctor who attended at his birth was Lever the novelist.

George White had two brothers, one of them, James, a couple of years older than himself, the other, John, four years younger. All three boys were physically strong and active, especially the eldest, whose feats in walking, swimming, and other bodily exercises were remarkable. He is also said to have had exceptional good looks and charm of manner, with the promise of brilliant ability. The youngest son had also unusual ability, and to those who knew him was a very lovable character; but he had inherited something of his father's shyness, which to the end of his life he never lost. George White used to say in after life that he himself was always regarded as the stupid one of the family. Possibly he winced a little at this



Rock Castle, the Birthplace of Sir George White.

reputation, for his early letters contain much "chaff" about his younger brother's attainments. Nevertheless, the two were fast friends, and the "stupid" brother was always at bottom full of pride and admiration for the clever one.

Before he was nine years old, George White was sent to his first school, at Bromsgrove, in England. From there he writes to his sister the earliest of the letters which have been preserved by his family. It is written evidently with some difficulty, mostly on ruled paper, and with little regard for spelling or stops.

I take advantage of the holiday to write I am going to learn to swim this month I like school very much most of the boys like it 3 new boys have come since we did on the half holidayes I generly walk to the station [then follows something undecipherable about a "parrsole"] the English boys are not a bit Quieter than the irish I was vaxinated on tuesday there are five boys sleep in the room with James and I Jameson is the bigest boy in the school there are only 4 boys as little as me tell me how your ear is and if Mr Wild thinks it is getting better tell John that thear is A boy hear A great deal bigger than I and that he could conquor him easy . . . excuse this bad writing the boys are pushing me thet I cannot writ Mr Collis is very kind . . . we have plenty of time for play Mr Ces two brothers are taut with the rest of the boys one about 15 and the other about 12 I have no more news to tell you so adieu Dear Jane your affectionate brother George Stuart White.

This letter is dated "1st of May." The year is not given, but it was probably written in 1844. In spite of its cheerful tone, the experiment does not seem to

have been a success. The school was thought to be unsuitable for so small a boy, and he was soon taken away from it.

It was with reference to this that he wrote long afterwards: "I think I was eight when I was sent to school. . . . I learnt nothing, and was miserable." In another letter, written in 1888, he says: "I don't think I have been as unhappy since as I often was at school." The fact was that George White, like others of his family, was always shy and sensitive, though not to the same extent as his younger brother.

However this may be, he now remained at home for two or three years, until, in January 1847, at the age of eleven and a half, he was sent to King William's College in the Isle of Man. Here he seems to have been happier. One of his schoolfellows, the Rev. William Prosser, who is still living, has written down his recollections of White at this time, and the following extracts are taken from his paper:—

> We were simply inseparable. This was generally admitted. Did any fellow want one of us and fail to find him, he was promptly told where the other was. "Go there. He's sure to be there." To his friends and intimates he was always "Duck White." I don't know how he got the name. I only know that it did not originate with me. . . .
>
> We were not in the same house. He was at Harvey's (third master), I at the Principal's. I can see myself now, every morning, standing on the Tower doorstep, watching for him to come along the road. He didn't shine much in the classroom, any more than I did. . . .
>
> He was what you may call a true Saxon boy; tall for

his age, exceptionally good-looking: very fair: a brightly animated and most refined face: the bluest of blue eyes. . . .

It was in the cricket-field that he was most prominent. He was a beautiful player: captain of our eleven. I can see him in his white flannels now. . . . He was a thorough Irish boy in his sparkling talk and love of fun. This with his genuine kindness, . . . graceful courtesy, keen truthfulness, high honour, and strong sense of duty, made him a universal favourite.

He was a splendid swimmer. Our school, towering up behind the antiquated ruin that crowned Hango Hill, faced the broad Castletown Bay; and every day during the bathing season the whole of us trooped down to the sands, with one of the masters in charge, for our daily treat. A certain number, including us two, used to strike out together for a deep-sea swim, and it was then that he appeared to fullest advantage. As we loved to be together on land, so it was in the water. We would strike out side by side; and it was delightful to watch the ease and grace and strength of his movement.

This passage seems to suggest the reason for White's nickname. He remarks in a letter written long afterwards, that when at school his highest ambition was to be in the eleven, or the best fives player, and evidently he did not greatly distinguish himself in his work.

One of White's schoolfellows at King William's College was Frederick William (Dean) Farrar, whose story of school life, 'Eric, or Little by Little,' was at one time so popular. It is said that an incident in this book was evidently suggested by the death of a boy of the name of Wodehouse at King William's College. In 'Eric,' the boy who fell over the cliff was repre-

sented as having been alone at the time with a little boy of the name of "Wright." In after life George White used to say that the name of Wright was probably suggested by his name, as he was with Wodehouse in the circumstances described, but that "Wright's" character was certainly not drawn from his. Mr Prosser, who remembers the incident well, says that "Wright and White had nothing whatever in common," and that "at King William's College White was never a 'little' boy, as he was from the first big for his age."

I have tried in vain to get any more accurate information about White's school-days. The following is a letter about him from Canon Wilson of Worcester:—

> I well remember White at King William's College. He was senior to me, and in a higher form, and in a different boarding-house, so that we were never thrown together; and he left the school when he was about fifteen, and was therefore not one of the conspicuous few. But nevertheless my recollection of him is perfectly distinct. The school consisted at that time of a very, very "rough" lot, to use the mildest and least explicit adjective; and I remember White as always looking and being a gentleman. I have absolutely no other recollection of him.

It appears from one of White's letters that before this, when he was a small boy, he was "very keen to be a sailor," but apparently his father did not approve of the idea, and in after life he was thankful that his wish had not been granted. Perhaps it was not very strong. The family tradition is that from the

time he was a child he was set upon being a soldier. His only surviving sister remembers that in "his games on the sea-shore he was always shouting words of command, and such phrases as 'Glory, Honour, and Promotion.'" This is not incompatible with a wish to follow in the footsteps of our great seamen. Probably the fact is that in his boyhood George White's desire was simply for a life of adventure and fighting, and that in common with many boys, perhaps most boys, he was at one time attracted by the idea of finding it upon the high seas.

From King William's College, in 1850, at the age of fifteen, George White went on to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, which he entered after the midsummer vacation. From there he writes to his sister Jane, all through life perhaps his most faithful correspondent. His Sandhurst letters at first are still innocent of stops :—

July 29th.

This is an awful place for the first week or two but now all the cadets are very jolly some very nice fellows I daresay you remember me saying that Captain Elrington the gentleman who came down in the coach with me from Ovragh told me that we got beef only once a week and it is a fact we get it on Sundays and either a shoulder or leg of mutton every other day we get up every morning at six except Sunday when we get up at eight we go to bed every night without any exception at about a quarter past nine there a chapel belonging to the College and we have prayers there every morning and evening we march in to all our meals if we do anything wrong we are put under arrest that is we are not allowed out of our bed rooms except at study and meal times and parade I get plenty of bland music here the band plays when

we march into our meals and all that sort of thing besides when they are practicing which is as bad as you struming at Bayswater there is very good pike fishing here I caught one here on Saturday four lbs weight. . . .

if you are not turned out from Study more than once, at the end of your second ½ you get a stripe across the wrist of your coat together with an increase of 6d pocket money and if you are not turned out more than once you get another stripe at the end of your 3d ½ and at the end of your fourth half on the same conditionds you can get a crown on your coat and there they stop. . . .

Emily Warren had the impudence to send me a message to this effect Tell your brother that I hope he likes his stick ups as much as he expected but we do not use our stick ups for they furnish us with VERY PLEASANT stickups he [?here] (IE stocks)

Good bye old Gal ever your affectionate brother

GS WHITE

Sept. 8, 1850.

I got your letter this morning and I loose no time in answering it I am sure you have a very pleasant time of it in old Mountjoy you did not tell me how old fat William is getting on or anything about any of my old friends I wish you would tell the fat boy the next time I go to see him I will be able to help him exercise his horses as I am getting quite a horseman I dont know what to say I got a letter from F Stuart the other day which I answered the same day you may write as often as you like old girl but you put a stamp on next time Ha Ha Ha I have been here nearly ½ my time now as our holidays begin on the 7th of November rather a spec as we say in this part of the world fancy if I get my commission in 3 years I will only be 18 when I will be an officer in her Majesty's service that is rather a look out you ought to come and see me here some day in my red coat if ever you come I will put on my best red coat & look an

awful swell It is a very pretty place all about here it is well worth coming to see I must say goodbye ever your very affec brother (IE bother) · G S WHITE

PS—You are a regular brick for telling F S I never got her letter.

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE
May 6th 1853

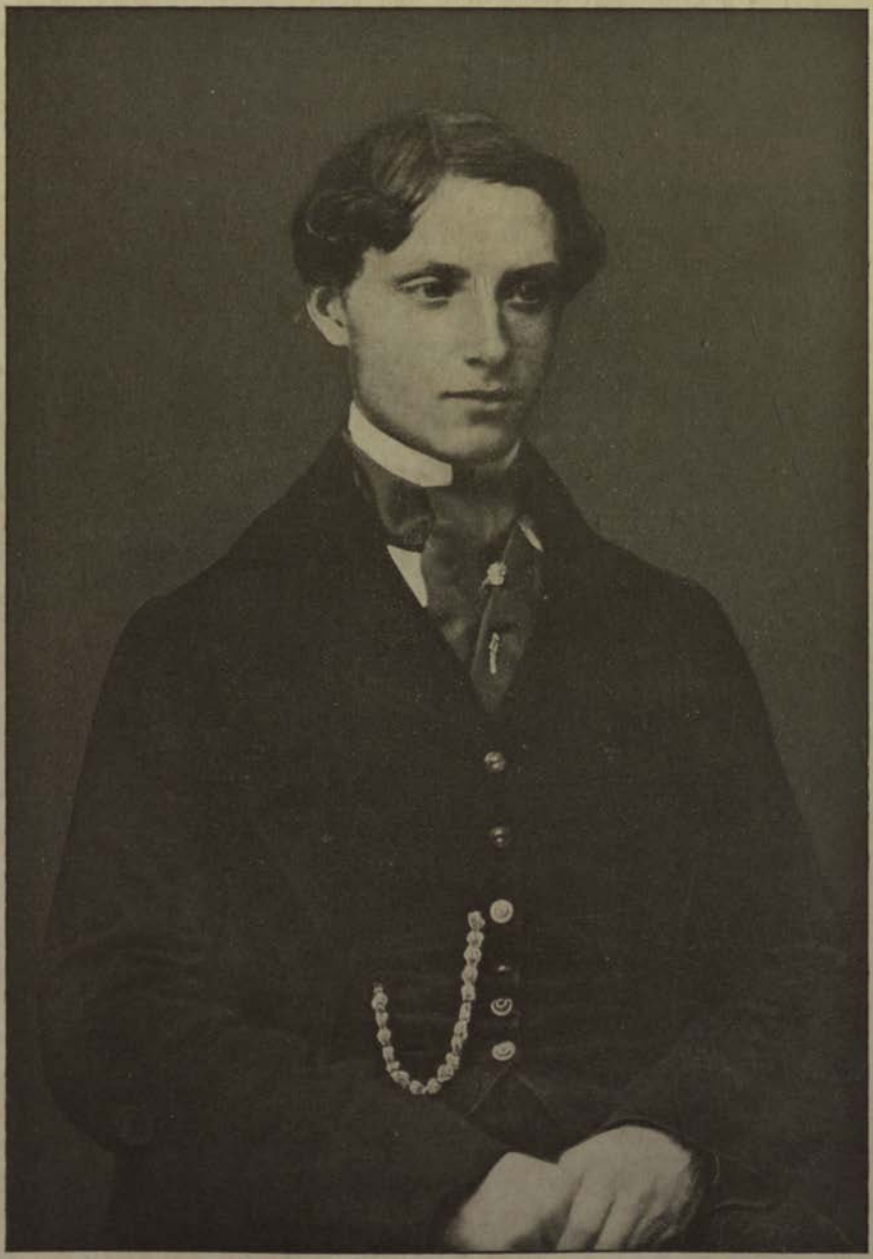
by the sheet of Paper which I have taken one would suppose that I had my head quite full of news, but please do not think anything of the kind. You ask me how I like being a Corporal and I answer that it gives me a great deal more to do than I otherwise would have, but nevertheless I stick to my old SAYING Glory Honour and Promotion *et en consequence* I would not like to be reduced to the ranks again; I suppose it results from a certain little weakness which is common to all flesh (*ie*) to like to have authority over others. I can think of nothing but French at present as I have just come out of a French Study where I afforded great amusement to the French Master (Mr Combier) by my vain endeavours to read Racine properly; The poor French fool thinks I am going to work myself up into a rage and take off to the life the furious Petit Jean & &. but I am not fond of making a fool of myself and wont do it for any Frenchman upon the whole it is rather amusing to watch the man when he gets in a rage as he does every day I go to him. . . .

I dont think in the whole course of my life (and that is near 18 years now) I ever wrote such a long letter before, so miss Jane White think yourself honoured ever your very affectionate brother GS WHITE

This letter, as will have been seen, is dated 1853. So George White had now been three years at the Royal Military College, and was within sight of his commission. He had not become a scholar, and his

writing as yet had little likeness to the fine bold hand he came to write later on. In after life he used to tell his children that he had educated himself entirely after he got into the army. At Sandhurst he seems to have been always a boy, idle and merry, and apt to get into trouble for small offences. One of the stories he used to tell against himself was that having been placed as a sentry over some guns for two or three hours, he had his time doubled as a punishment because he was seen to be helping himself at intervals from a store of cake he had hidden in the muzzle of one of the pieces. And though he became an Under Officer before he left, he does not seem to have specially distinguished himself in any way.

Nevertheless, George White was by this time a taking boy, tall and strong for his age, with the makings of a fine horseman, and "a very affectionate sunny nature." He seems from various descriptions to have had in him, as so many Ulstermen have, an attractive blend of the Irishman and the Scot. Shy at bottom, and ashamed of any display of emotion, he had nevertheless the Irish ease of manner, and was not awkward or ungracious. He had also the Irish imagination, and, though conspicuously truthful in reality, was fond of making up extravagant stories, which were sometimes taken seriously. And, according to the family legends, there was, mixed with his shyness, a certain touch of impudence. He had neither voice nor ear, but his sisters used to tell how, when asked at a party whether he could sing, he immediately agreed, and, with the help of



GEORGE WHITE AS A YOUNG MAN.

From a Daguerrotype.

a quick-witted cousin, rendered a song with such feeling that the audience felt bound to conceal their laughter. At another house, it is said, he excused himself for leaving early, on the ground that he did not like to keep his wife sitting up for him, and for a time it was generally believed that he was married.

Though not a scholar, George White, like the rest of his family, was fond of poetry. His younger brother John, afterwards Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education, distinguished himself when at Oxford by several poems, one of which won the Newdigate. George White, in his young days, did not apparently commit himself to anything more ambitious than acrostics and contributions to albums, but he read poetry, and having a remarkably good memory, laid up a store for himself. To the end of his life he could repeat long pieces learnt when he was a boy. Tennyson's verse specially appealed to him, and it is said that one of his favourite pieces was the "Lotus Eaters," which he knew by heart from beginning to end. He used to quote also from Moira O'Neill's 'Songs of the Glens of Antrim,' some of which refer to places on his own lands. But this was later.

In the early fifties the Whites spent a year or two in Dublin, where they had bought a house, and they had some friends with literary tastes, among them Stopford Brooke and Alexander Miller, and the young people joined keenly in the then fashionable amusement of *bouts-rimés* and acrostics.

I have been told by the way, as an instance of

George White's memory for verse, that when he met his old schoolfellow Prosser in 1900—fifty years after their last meeting—White quoted, verbatim, to Prosser's astonishment, a long acrostic which he had written when the two were at King William's College.

George White left Sandhurst in 1853, and on the 4th November was gazetted an Ensign in the 27th Inniskillings.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST YEAR OF SERVICE.

For a year after he joined the Inniskillings White seems to have remained in Dublin, where the regiment was quartered.

His father and mother were at this time living at Beardiville, a pretty country place belonging to the Leckys, not far from Portrush, in the extreme north of Ireland, and the young Ensign joined them there at times; but travelling in those days was not as easy a matter as it is now, and his visits were apparently rare. The only letter of his written during this year, which has been preserved, refers to the last of these visits, when his regiment was under orders for India, and he went north to see his people before sailing. It is only dated "Thursday," but was evidently written in June 1854, when he was nineteen years of age.

To his sister Jane White.

Royal Main Gate Guard.

Although I have written very often lately, being on guard I take the opportunity of informing you that I have ordered

your skirt and hat the former at Johnston's in Dawson St the later from Wright & Oxley in Sackville St I hope they may both give satisfaction and fit well I am in hopes of getting leave on Saturday in which case I will be with you on Monday or Tuesday but unless Downing comes back I wont get any leave, at least I think so but I am not sure of anything at present except that we (that is to say 5 companies) leave Dublin on the 16th for Cork and embark from the said Cork for India on the 20th my Company has been altered again and now I am a Grenadeer I dont know how you spell it one bit but it is something like that, I refused the appointment at first on account of the additional expense but the Colonel was so determined to put me in them that I could not help myself the altering of all my uniform will cost a great deal Captain Langley of whom you have heard is now my Captain but the ship I go out in has not been altered, I see James has got his Lieutenantcy without purchase he is in great luck[1] I wish I was a Lieutenant it would make the difference of about 6 years service to me which is no small consideration to a man who intends. Every day I hear about a hundred different accounts of India one man tells me it is the best place to go under the sun, then another tells me it is a perfect Hades but I will very soon have an opportunity of judging for myself. . . . I employed myself all yesterday in leaving P P C s with all my friends here and collecting all the sympathy I could I have nothing more to say so here conclude yours & & GStuart White.

It will be remarked that although the writing is still boyish, and George White does not know how to spell "Grenadier," he is already, to use his own terse language, "a man who intends." There is promise in that phrase.

[1] His elder brother had also become a soldier, but he died young.

George White says nothing to his sister about a disappointment under which the Inniskillings were then labouring, but it had been a severe one. Probably some of his letters written earlier in the year —he says he had "written very often lately"—had been full of the subject, but they are not to be found. The disappointment seriously affected White's career in life, as is shown by the following extract from a memorandum written not long ago by his old friend, Sir John Dunne.

My first recollection of George White is in May 1854, when he was an Ensign in the 27th Inniskillings in the Royal Barracks, Dublin, under immediate orders for India. In those days this entailed a horribly tedious voyage of some five months round the Cape in hired sailing ships. As war with Russia had just been declared, and the Guards had already started for Gallipoli, the 27th were naturally terribly disgusted with their fate. So also were the 90th in the same Barracks, also under orders for India in the autumn. Lieut. Garnet Wolseley had just joined them. Both Regiments were of course very envious of the better luck of mine, the 21st Fusiliers, awaiting embarkation for the East. But this did not prevent them giving us a right royal send-off dinner, which only ended in time for us to fall in on parade at 6 A.M. to start in the Golden Fleece for Varna.

The destination of Regiments frequently affects the fortune of its officers for their whole lives.

The Scots Fusiliers going out to war then made me a Captain at 19½ and a Colonel before 30.

The 27th went off to India and were stuffed all through the Mutiny in some out-of-the-way station, and for the dozen years that he was in them there was never a ghost of an opportunity given to George White to show the mettle that was in him.

Inkerman and our losses in the Crimea caused the 90th to be sent there instead of to India, and gave Wolseley the chance he knew so well how to utilise; and again, when the Mutiny broke out in May 1857, the 90th were on their way to China, and had passed Ceylon, when they were luckily wrecked (in the Straits of Malacca), and consequently got up to Calcutta in time for the first Relief of Lucknow, which made Wolseley a Lieut.-Colonel at 25 in 1859.

George White was in effect about to enter upon a long period of service which, though it did not destroy "the mettle that was in him," yet severely tried his endurance, and often made his heart sick with hope deferred.

For many years, while his luckier contemporaries were winning the "glory, honour, and promotion" he had longed for in his boyhood, he was to look on without seeing a shot fired. Long after Dunne and Wolseley were field-officers, he was still a subaltern.

This is anticipation, but the slowness of White's advancement was so remarkable a feature of his life that it seems as well to bring out the fact from the beginning. It may serve to encourage any readers of this book who are suffering from similar ill-luck. His career is one of the many which show that no one need despair if success is slow in coming; and that the man who continues, in spite of discouragement, to make himself fit for any work that may be laid upon him, will often find his reward in the end.

CHAPTER IV.

VOYAGE TO INDIA.

1854-1855.

GEORGE WHITE sailed from Cork on the 20th June 1854 in the ship *Charlotte*, which was to take out a portion of the Inniskillings by way of the Cape to Calcutta. A voyage to India in those days was a very different matter from what it is now. The ships employed for the transport of troops were comparatively small, and to modern ideas the discomforts which the passage imposed upon officers and men were almost intolerable. Moreover, the time spent on board these sailing vessels was four times as long as that passed in the great steamships of to-day. No one who is not enthusiastically fond of the sea will find that a passage to the Cape in a transport is even now an altogether comfortable experience; but the difference betwen the conditions under which our troops were taken out to South Africa during the war of 1899, when the transport service was magnificently managed, and those which prevailed half a century earlier, is immeasurable. Lord Wolseley tells us in

his autobiography that the British soldier was happier on board a hired transport than in a ship of the Royal Navy, which was for him the "acme of discomfort"; but the hired transport was bad enough. The Inniskillings, no doubt, went through the usual miseries, and had been twelve weeks at sea before they doubled the Cape of Storms. What ensued, George White describes in the following letters:—

ALGOA BAY,
Thursday 5th October.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I have already sent you one letter by the regular post but from personal experience I can say that nothing is very sure of arriving in England which starts from this so I send you this which is a copy or nearly so of the one already sent.

I suppose you will have seen in the papers before this reaches you of the melancholy loss of the *Charlotte*, but at all events I will go over it again. I had a fine long letter all ready written with the description of my voyage, which was a very slow and a very dull one but really the awful termination of it has driven everything else out of my mind, sufficient it is to say that after going through some of the most awful weather ever known about the Cape, we put in here for water on the morning of the 19th of September having been about three months at sea. I was on duty that day and of course could not get on shore all the others went on shore, Captain Warren who was on duty next day (20th) promissing to come on board again early next morning, but luckily for me as you will see afterwards, he changed his mind and came on board later on the evening of the 19th everybody advised me to stay on board that night and go on shore early next morning as the surf was running very high, but with the true madness of an Irishman I trusted to my powers of swimming in case of an upset to get on shore, and the boat

was upset and I with great difficulty reached the shore without a thing but the clothes on my back, however I got into a very good hotel and made myself quite at home, next morning (20) it was impossible to hold any communication with the ship as the surf was fearful, the Port Captain (Lieut. Bennet, R.N.) who by the by is a friend of the Dungannon people and used to live somewhere near Church Hill made signals to the *Charlotte* to take down her Top Gallant yards and masts and to moor ship which was done accordingly, but at about 6 o'clock P.M. she snapped one of her cables and very soon after the other went and to the horror of all on shore we saw that the *Charlotte* was gone however the Captain got sail on her but owing to the taking down of the Top Gallant yards & masts this was not done as quickly as it might otherwise have been (my own opinion is that the *Charlotte* would have got to sea if this had not been done) the fore topsails also being unbent was against her, indeed every single thing was against her however she got clear this time but in endeavouring to beat back again in order to get out to sea the wind failed her and she went ashore on the rocks in the worst part of the whole bay and at the very worst hour, and there she stuck within 150 yds of the shore and not a thing could we do to give assistance to those on board. Ropes were shot on board from the shore but by this time it was so dark that those on board could not see them during all this time we saw every wave dash over her in clouds of foam and the shrieks of the women were awful as their children were washed overboard one after another every one on board being up to their middles in water, about 12 o'clock her masts went overboard with a fearful crash and many a brave heart was crushed beneath them, at this time we plainly distinguished Captain Warren's voice (he being the only officer on board) asking for a boat to be sent to them but every body thought such a thing impossible, however the Life Boat was launched and Lieut. Bennet and Captain Salmond (a native of the place) took command of her, and

I hear, succeeded in getting alongside of her and asked for a rope but every body on board was so benumbed with cold and so afraid of letting go their hold as the waves were sweeping their comrades off one after another That this request was not complied with I saw none of this myself as I went up to the Hotel to dry my clothes, I having been up to my neck in water nearly the whole time firing rockets and other things to show those on board that every exertion was being made that could from the shore Numbers of the men jumped overboard thinking they could reach the shore by swimming but of these only two arrived alive. But I have forgot to mention that those in the Life Boat, having seen that no assistance could be rendered in returning were upset but fortunately none of the brave crew were lost, at about 1 o'clock A.M. (21st) she parted right amidships nearly all the soldiers remaining with the after part, which after an hour of the most fearful suspense was washed up higher on the rocks, several of those on shore dashed over the rocks to the rescue of the sufferers, I was the first to reach the poop and I shall never forget the sight. Bad as I had expected it my ideas fell far short of the reality men and women nearly all perfectly naked their flesh black with bruises and bleeding with cuts caused by the falling of spars etc were throwing their helpless bodies on the rocks. I succeeded in saving several both women and men amongst those saved was Captain Warren, 27th Regt, Captain Afflick of the *Charlotte*, his son, and the 1st Mate, and 4 women and about 98 soldiers the men behaved with the exception of my servant very well several of them performing feats of the greatest daring we got all the survivors into a thing they call a barrack here, and gave each man a blanket and left them to make themselves comfortable for the night not one moment were one of the three officers who were on shore off their legs that night and when I had time to think of it I found I had the same wet clothes on, that I had pulled the people out in, I had forgot to say that all who remained

with the fore part of the ship when she parted were lost, Assistant Surgeon Kidd, who was on board at the time was washed overboard but was Miraculously saved by means of a swimming belt which he had bought for him at Cork, I think I now have given you all the account of the wreck which will be something like the official despatch, as I wrote it, Capt Stapylton not being any great hand with his pen and you will now say with me that I had a providential escape of being on board and indeed the only officer on board being Capt Warren reads better than Ensign White's being left alone in Command of so many men, Now for the consequence of the wreck. I have not one single thing in the world saved worth having but my card plate which was picked up the next day and the chain which Wadman gave me which one of the soldiers found some where or other a day or two ago but as I know nothing whatsoever about money matters I intend to do exactly as the others do. General Jackson in his answer to the report sent to him has been pleased to say that he entirely approves of all the arrangements made here for the men and that H.M. frigate *Hydra* should be sent round in order to take us to Cape Town there to await the earliest opportunity of being sent on to Calcutta I intend sending this letter to England by a vessel which leaves this the day after tomorrow in which Captain Afflick and his son return to England I shall feel quite sorry to leave this place I have been treated with such kindness by everybody, all the officers have sent in a return of their losses, but expect not to get more than £50 or £60 as the government are by no means liberal in like cases

I suppose you have got the address of the man to whom you are to send money for me to Calcutta as well as I remember it was—

Major BURN
Fort William
Calcutta

Mrs Montgomery to whom remember me can tell as Mr Alexander gave it to her for me

Since I wrote the former letter our chief occupation has been attending funerals about 30 bodies I think it is have been washed up, on Monday last I had a very disagreeable duty to perform which was to dig up some bodies which had been buried in the sand without coffins and Major Robertson the Commandant here sent me to see them dug up and put into coffins which I think was quite unnecessary I could scarcely get the men to do it and one body when they tried to lift it came to pieces in their hands it was a fearful afternoon tremendous thunder and lightning and the men were quite frightened at this who had never lost their courage on this wreck, when I say I think it was quite unnecessary I do not mean to send me but to put the men into coffins. I have nothing more to tell you about this affair but will write again from Cape Town when we arrive there hoping that this will find you all quite well in health and spirits I remain

Your very affectionate son

GEORGE STUART WHITE

PS the last news here is the second of August so you may imagine how we long for some account of what is going on now.

CASTLE BARRACKS, CAPE TOWN,
Wednesday, October 18th, 54.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

We arrived in Cape Town on Monday after a beautiful run of three days from Algoa Bay which place I was quite sorry to leave, I think I told you in my letter of advice that we were to go by the *Hydra*. I have been congratulating myself ever since I went on board of her on the escape I had of going into the navy, but to return to my subject, we landed here on Monday morning a fearful hot day the glass above 95 and got the men into Barracks but as the officers have no furniture or indeed anything, we have taken up our abode in one of the hotels here for the present, but as everything is double the price it is at home I must try to get into Barracks as soon as I can procure some

bedding & &, it would be very hard to say how long we may be here as our only chance of getting on to India is if a vessel puts in here for Calcutta with room for 100 men 5 women and 5 officers a great reduction of our number when starting from Cork which was then 5 officers, 163 men, 16 women and 29 children.

Friday, 20th.

I have got into Barracks at last or rather I have got into a room about a hundred ft square in which I have got one of the soldiers beds, where I shake down every night I intend to-morrow to commence a regular soldiers life. I intend drawing my rations and making my servant cook them and live in solitary grandeur in my room or rather in my desert. I have been employing myself the last two days in buying things that I could not do without and here I am now after drawing £100 on you in Port Elizabeth with only £30 left, you have no idea of what it costs to set one up again when all is lost and when one has to provide every thing for themselves, it is not like joining your regiment or anything of that kind for then you have things which are really of very little value of themselves but nevertheless cost a heap of money to replace, but I have said enough of my troubles so here goes for a description of Cape Town, it is a far larger and better town than Port Elizabeth well and regularly built and prettily situated at the foot of an enormous Rock called Table Mountain indeed if it were not for the Black people and the air of independence about every body and everything one might fancy themselves in England you see Cabs flying about the streets in every direction and indeed in this respect the people here are far before their countrymen north of the Equator the cabs here are not drawn by horses that can hardly draw one leg after another but dash along the streets at a surprising rate you may imagine what other things are when you hear that the Cabmen pay £150 for their turn out but you have to pay in proportion for instead of getting a 6d set down here you pay 2s 6d, at home you think it a great

sight to see a man driving 4 in hand but here you see a Hottentot Charioteer, driving 8 in hand through the streets and guiding them with an enormous long whip which they use with wonderful dexterity, the waggons which come in from the country are always drawn by oxen and have never les then 14 yoked at a time, this is no exaggeration; all the other officers like this place better than Port Elizabeth but I must confess I liked Port Elizabeth the best I was made a great deal of there and every body was civil to me particularly Mr Deare who cashed me the bill which I drew on you for £100 (I don't remember whether I told you that Capt Stapylton backed my bill) Mrs Deare was a darling pretty little woman and took a great fancy to me and whenever the time was heavy on my hands, I used to go and sit with her, here on the contrary no body has shown us any kindness when we landed instead of having some one to show us where to march the men they let us march up to the Main Barracks and when we got there we were told we might go to the right about and march back to the Castle Barracks which if we had been informed of at first as we ought to have been we would have been saved a long walk on a fearful hot day . . .

This morning when we marched the men to the garrison Chapel not one of the 73rd came near us, I suppose they are offended because we don't go to their mess, we have heard nothing more with regard to our being sent on to India, there is one vessel here (the *Maidstone*) that brought out troops but I believe she asks more from this than the *Charlotte* was to have got from Cork, however the Captain's offer has been sent up to Graham's Town and we are in daily expectation of the Commander in Chief's (General Jackson's) answer, There appears to be every likelihood of another war here, several officers who had got as far as this on their way home to England have been recalled and the Cape Mounted Rifles have been ordered to recruit immediately it would be a great go if we were to be kept here for a Caffir war, for my part I hope most sincerely we wont as we would run every chance of

being shot and get no promotion, I see by the Times that H. Warren 60th Rifles has got his company so that I suppose he now stays at home there is some difference between his luck and that of Captain of ours, who has only 6 years service and did not purchase either his company or his first commission. I have just heard that the *Blenheim* sails for England to-morrow so I must get this ready for her I daresay I will have another opportunity of writing before I leave the Cape I see the 5th arrived all safe in Turkey I hope J Montgomery may have equal luck throughout the whole war with best love to all my relations and friends believe me ever your very affectionate son GEORGE STUART WHITE

PS—I shall want endless supplies of money when I arrive at Calcutta.

Evidently the offer of the *Maidstone's* captain was accepted, for White's next letter was written on board her, when after a voyage of more than six months from Ireland he found himself about to land in India.

January 6th, 55.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I once again sit down to write to you on board the Ship *Maidstone*. We have at last arrived at the Mouth of the river and are now lying at anchor waiting for a steamer to tug us up to Calcutta, we heard very little news yet the little we have heard we got from the Pilot whom we took on board two days ago but he had only one paper and that a Calcutta one of a month old we expected to have heard of the taking of Sebastipol, which I suppose we shall by the time we arrive in Calcutta, the Pilot tells us that the three other ships bringing out our men arrived quite safe much about the same time, the *Soubhidar* first, but to return to myself we left the Cape the day I spoke of in my last letter, The *Maidstone* sails well but we had high and contrary winds

nearly the whole way, so that on the whole we made a slow passage, we had only one storm but that certainly was a good one shortly after we left the Cape; we ran 314 miles before the wind in 24 hours with only one sail set . . .

I hope they may leave us long enough in Calcutta to get some things as I have not now got a thread to cover my back you may imagine how anxious I am to hear all about you. I am writing this for the Monthly Overland Steamer which we expect to meet somewhere in the river, the fellows will hardly know me when I join the regiment again I am so sunburnt I am beginning to think that I was not so badly off in losing all my things at Algoa Bay as nothing I had would have fitted me now I am cultivating a moustache but it is as yet very feeble, but my whiskers are quite correct. this is the depth of winter here "My goodness" what winter!!! if you stir you are bathed in perspiration and the glass 82 in the shade I hear it is 130 in the sunshine for the last three weeks I have slept every night on deck in order to be cool, besides the fleas and bugs are fearful down below; I wish Johnny would feel an Indian flea or bug they are as big as a shrimp, talking of shrimps reminds me of one of the most disagreeable things about sailing up the Ganges which is the number of dead Darkies (i e black men) that are always floating about, all the shrimps get fat off them. Christmas day on board of the *Maidstone* was by no means gay, I hope you enjoyed yours more but I rather like sailouring on the whole. I hope you will not be too hard on this letter as I have really nothing to say till I get on shore and I wished to report my arrival to you as soon as possible knowing that you will be anxious to hear ever your most affectionate son

GEORGE STUART WHITE.

There is nothing to show what were George White's first impressions of India, or how long he remained in Calcutta; but the destination of his regiment being Sialkot in the Punjab, a thousand miles away to the

W. & A. K. Johnston, Limited, Edinburgh & London.

north-west, he was soon on the march "up country." By the time he arrived, after three months steady marching, he had seen something of India and its various populations — as various as the nations of Europe. Between the soft unwarlike Bengalee of Calcutta and the fighting Sikh or Mahomedan of the Punjab, there was no similarity. And midway lay Oudh and the North-West Provinces, the home of the "Purbea" or Eastern Sepoys, who then formed the bulk of our Bengal army, and had little in common with either the Punjabis or the population of Calcutta.

At Umballa the Inniskillings, or rather the ship-wrecked detachment, for the rest of the regiment had marched up before, were inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Gomm, "who seemed rather surprised to see all the officers drawn out in front, some with hats on and some with caps, and all the soldiers got up like sailors." Nevertheless, White observes, with the irreverence of the British subaltern, the Commander-in-Chief "was silly enough to say that we presented *a most soldier-like appearance.* I was standing close to him when this came out, and I had to laugh."

A little later the march was enlivened by robbers, who were not afraid to practice their skill on the camp of a British force.

SEALKOTE, *April 4th* 1855.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—

Nothing extraordinary took place after our departure from Jullundhur until our arrival at the camp ground one day's

march from Umritzur where Kidd's tent was robbed and several of the soldiers, the married soldiers, had all their things taken; I had a very lucky escape as usual my tent and Kidd's were the two most exposed to the attacks of these midnight robbers as I was on the extreme right and he on the extreme left of the camp, but to return to my history, as I had so few things, I put all my boxes and bags under me and slept on the top of them enveloped in a great Razi or native blanket so that any body intending to rob me would have to make away with me first when my friend the tent-breaker had forced an entrance which he did by cutting a hole in my tent with a large knife which they all carry, he felt all about the tent trying to lay his hand on something that he could run away with but the first thing his hand came in contact with, was my face as I lay asleep and a well-greased hand on anybody's face is sufficient to awaken them, when I was sufficiently awake to know what to do I made a spring out of bed at him and caught him but I could not hold him as he was perfectly naked and all oiled so that he slipped through my fingers like an eel, but I think he must have the mark of my thumb in him yet, I ordered one of my numerous black servants to go and give the alarm but he was afraid to move after what had happened and as I had no fancy for dressing myself and going out in the middle of the night when I had to be up at 2 to march I went asleep again and next morning when we were going to march there was the greatest uproar for nearly every body had been robbed . . .

In the course of the march White had visited the famous temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar, and had been much impressed—

I went to see it just as the sun was setting on it and it looked like some fairy golden temple rising out of a lake of crystal, one of my brother officers who was with me

would not come to see it as it would be profaning it in the eyes of the natives to go in to it with your shoes on and he was too proud to take his off but my love of the beautiful overcame my Vulgar English prejudices and indeed I have been in the habit of humbling myself in this way ever since I landed in India as I have inspected every thing of the sort that I have come across since my march commenced but this was far the finest I have yet seen.

Nevertheless George White's first three months in India had not given him any liking for the country. One of his sisters had been told by a certain Mr Knox that it was a "very delightful place," and White protested indignantly—

She also adds that he is a very nice person, but I say he is a most fearful liar, and tell him so with my compliments no man even as big a fool as Mr Knox must be *could* like it. The first man I hear saying India is a good place I shall knock down it was liars of that sort that induced me to come out here if I had known what sort of a place it was I should have left the army and taken to breaking stones in Ireland.

White changed his mind in the course of time, and came to like India more than well; but for some years he could not get rid of the "Vulgar English prejudices" on the subject, and his life in consequence was less enjoyable than it might have been. For a young and healthy man with manly tastes, especially if he has a touch of romance in him, there are few better countries in the world. There are none where the Englishman has finer work to do, or does it better.

CHAPTER V.

SIALKOT.

1855-1857.

THE shipwrecked detachment had marched into its own station, Sialkot, on the 30th March 1855, "amidst the deafening cheers of the rest of the regiment," and George White was soon installed in a bungalow which he had agreed to share with a fellow-subaltern, Twemlow.

In spite of his low opinion of India he seems to have settled into his new home with a fairly contented mind. Twemlow, who had arrived in the station before him, had bought the bungalow for the not excessive sum of £220, and White was puzzled by the question how he was to pay his share of this, "when I have not got a rap in the world." He had lost in the shipwreck everything he possessed, even his watch and clothes. But this question he dismissed with the confidence of nineteen, and for the rest he was satisfied with, not to say rather proud of, his first landed estate. It was "a good cool house," and in

other respects all that a subaltern could desire. "We have two very very good bed rooms two good bath rooms and an exceedingly nice and cheerful and at the same time cool sitting-room . . . a nice little garden and a very capital four horse stable."

Into this stable George White brought the first horse he had ever possessed, "which Stapylton sold to me very cheap as he is vicious I do not object to him much on that account." What the horse was White does not say—probably a Cape horse or a country-bred—for there were, I think, no Australians in India in those days. Certainly it was not an Arab, for he adds, curiously enough, "I do not like the Arabs by any means I consider them ugly brutes. I would not give my horse for any Arab in the station, if I wanted to get an Arab equal to my weight (near 14 stone as I ride) I would have to give £100 for him." Perhaps the price had something to do with the opinion, for it is difficult to imagine how any unprejudiced man could call Arabs "ugly brutes." They are small for a big man, and many of them are apt to trip at a walk; but a good Arab is the best-bred horse in the world, and shows his blood all over. For his size too—rarely much over 14.2—he carries weight, and he has great endurance.

White goes on to inform his mother that Sialkot is "the best place as far as scenery goes that I have seen since my Indian life commenced. We have a fine view of the Hills (Himalayas) but in other respects it is like all other places in India very dull and fearfully tiresome." Such amusement as

there was did not appeal to him: "We are to have three or four days racing here beginning on the 10th and a grand race ball but balls in India are not to my fancy the proportion of men being about 20 to 1 woman besides even the small number of women there are all married."

It is an ill wind that blows no one good, and the women at all events must have had plenty of partners.

In any case White had fair reason to be content. Sialkot was not perhaps one of the favourite stations, for it was rather out of the way, and was regarded as dull; but it had, for a station in the Indian plains, a good climate, with a long "cold weather," and not as bad a hot weather as some others; and it was close to the Native State of Kashmir, one of the most beautiful countries in the world, with glorious mountain scenery and excellent shooting. The Inniskillings, too, were an exceptionally fine regiment, and the Commanding Officer had evidently formed a good opinion of the young Ensign, for White writes to his mother, "I think I told you that the Colonel wrote recommending me for my Lieutenancy but at the time I had no idea what a handsome letter he wrote I think I am certain to get it for nothing now that I have seen his recommendation." This in the old purchase days was no small matter to a man who "had not a rap."

White did get his Lieutenancy, as appears from the following letter written three months afterwards:—

June 14th, 55.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—

You will think it scandalous behaviour on my part not having written by last post and only sending this by this one, but anyone who knows the climate of Sealkote in the month of June will be able to find plenty of excuses, I am, I am happy to say in very good health not having had one day's illness since my fall, I wish I could say the same for our soldiers on an average one dies every day the other morning there were 5 dead in hospital and I expect the numbers will increase as the men first brought it on themselves by drinking & now they are so frightened that they drink to a very great extent we are now only about 700 strong instead of 1000 I forgot to tell you that I have seen my promotion in the Paper. I have got, I think, all your letters or nearly so now, one sometimes comes in that I ought to have got on my arrival in Calcutta so I recall all abuse I gave you for not writing. Mrs Barnes and the Capt. have gone on 5 months leave to Symla Mrs B. in bad health I find them no great loss as I never go near anybody, to make up for this I will write you a STUNER by next mail. I wish I was in the Crimea instead of this awful hole . . .

The wish to be in the Crimea was natural enough, and perhaps the grumble at the awful hole; but never going near anybody is hardly the way to make the best of awful holes.

As the hot weather wore on White got a month's leave, and started upon the first of his many journeys in the Himalayas, the taste for which grew upon him until they became his greatest pleasure. He tells in a letter to his sister how he sets out for Dalhousie, "a station about to be made in the Hills," and has various small adventures—swimming swollen rivers,

losing his baggage, and enduring the usual discomforts of rough travel. But as he gets higher he tastes the delight of bathing in ice-cold streams, and revels in the mountain scenery, which he says he has "not the presumption to attempt to describe," though he goes on to remark, quaintly enough, that anything he has seen before, compared with these heaven-bound hills, is "like the tiny pilot fish compared with the monster shark, whose constant attendant he is." And certainly the "mountain" of Slemish, upon which St Patrick fed his sheep, was very different from the giant peaks of the Himalayas, white with perpetual snow. His leave ended, White is back in Sialkot "*very* dirty, *very* strong, and *very* well," but "quite black with exposure to the sun," which had prostrated his companion Twemlow.

He had now enlarged his stud.

To Miss Jane White.

November 5th.

I had a fine run this morning after a jackal one of the best hunts we have had I got a fall my horse (not the one who fell with me before but my second horse) fell over a wall with me it was my fault as the horse was quite done after a 20 minutes gallop & the jump was rather too high for him however neither of us were hurt; since my return from leave the weather has altered almost incredibly the nights & mornings & evenings are quite cold now so that one gets a good sleep every night which is something delightful & we have not to be on parade till six o'clock in the morning now as it is quite cool enough then for exercise. A large party are going out from this wild hog hunting in a day or two, I would like to go very much, but my two horses though both very good are

too hot and unmanageable for this very dangerous sport the way of it is this you single out a wild hog and ride at him full speed with your reins in one hand & a long heavy spear in the other. When you get up to him you try to spear him; the hog often turns on you when if your horse is not very manageable and easily turned both you and he get ripped up. We have just had a racket court finished which is a great amusement to us what with hunting in the morning rackets in the evening & shooting cricket & billiards to fill up the spaces I think I will be able to exist through the cold weather though every day I remain in India I hate it more and more, it is making me so ill-tempered that I can hardly stand myself & besides I feel that I am becoming as great a boor as ever I was from never mixing in anything but men's society & if I was to call on people here & go to their Spreads I should be made so sick by their vulgarity that my Liver (that harbinger of woe in India) would be out of order in a week besides a man who has not been in the Crimea will be a nobody all the days of his life. It makes me positively mad when I think that my brother James should be in the centre of the world & taking part in every thing that is going on while I who would give all I have in the world to be there must fry like a black man in a country I hate & abhor without a chance of advancement of any one sort. . . .

This was not really like George White, and was perhaps due to his surroundings rather than to natural inclination. It was the tone too often adopted by the "Queen's officer" in India, who considered himself much superior to all about him, including his fellow-soldiers in the service of the East India Company. Yet that service included men like Frederick Roberts and Napier of Magdala, and many others just as well-born and well-bred as the Queen's officer who looked down upon them. There

is too much of this sort of thing even now, when the officers of the Indian army and those of the British service alike hold the King's Commission.

As he grew older George White shook himself free from all such snobbishness, and, while always proud of his regiment, learned to recognise that the men who led our Indian soldiery were among the finest of their race. They had done great things in the past, with small notice or encouragement from their countrymen in England, and were to do great things again. But it is not surprising that as a boy of twenty White was carried away by what he constantly heard around him.

As the hot weather of 1856 came on White began to find the climate trying, as of course it can be, though no healthy man who takes exercise and is moderately careful need ever be afraid of it. Certainly, if White's facts were correct, some of those who suffered had only themselves to thank. Here is an extract from one of his letters—

It is an awful life for a young man. I have already said that one does not feel inclined to eat, not so with the drinking it is absolute torture to avoid being a drunken brute and no man no matter how strong minded having once put his lips to a tumbler of water Claret or Brandy & water can possibly remove them till all is gone. We have just sent a nice young man home on sick leave whom we got on coming out here from the 22nd.

I have known him drink in June last year 43 glasses of Brandy 4 bottles of Beer a bottle of sherry and ten bottles of soda water before 12 o'clock Noon in one day and then crawl without a hat under the awful sun on his hands & knees to

his own Bungalow this appears fabulous but I can assure you it is not even an exageration. . . .

I can only remark on this that the habit of excessive drinking rapidly decreased among British officers in India. During twenty years spent in the country, from 1873 to 1893, I never saw a case even faintly resembling the one White describes. And at the close of that period, thanks largely to the introduction of polo, which demanded thorough fitness of body, and all the spare cash a man could find, the officers of the army in India spent remarkably little on wine and strong drinks.

On the 1st May 1856 George White was given a month's leave, and started for the Hills, keeping during his absence a journal, which on return he sent to his sister. There is not much of importance in it, but he sees Minal pheasants and peacocks and monkeys, and is awestruck by the immensity of the Snowy Range, as well he may be. From constant walking, he says, his legs are "like steel." The journal shows some fondness for reading poetry, and for writing more or less humorous verses, a taste which always remained. To tell the truth they are not very good, but they are good-tempered. On return to Sialkot he writes—

I measured myself for curiosity when I arrived. I stood in my stockings 5 ft. 11¾—on parade about 6 ft. 1 or 6 ft. ½ inch. measure without anything on 41 inches round the chest—13 round the left arm—and held out 5 stone at right angles to my body with one hand—a feat I don't

believe another man in Bengal could do, and altogether about as fine a specimen of what a soldier should be as one would wish to see.

One may readily agree, and need not quarrel with the young man's open satisfaction. To the end of his life White was always proud of his physical strength and fitness. It was a healthy foible, but in the end, when age had told on his heart, it led to his overtaxing his powers, as it so often does.

White's month in the Hills had raised his spirits, but they were dashed not long afterwards by the news that the regiment was to move again, and move to Nowshera, a hot rough station on the north-western frontier, — "a new station," he writes, "where no European regiment has yet been, and where the barracks for the men have not yet been completed, and where there is not so much as a shed for an officer." At the close of his journal he had written, "in truth Sealkote is enough to make a young fellow like me cut his throat." Now he saw matters in a different light, regretting his comfortable house and the conveniences of a settled station. It is well not to grumble, for fear of Nemesis.

But in truth White's grumbling was rather superficial, and certainly short-lived. "You will think from this doleful tale," he writes to his father, "that I am sorry to move, not a bit of it. I am on the contrary secretly in great spirits on account of it though I grumble louder than anyone in public." The fact was that he hoped the move would bring

retirements, and consequent promotion to the younger men. Moreover, it might result in his seeing service, of which there was always a chance on the north-west border-land. He had by this time turned his attention seriously to the study of his profession, and "we may have something to do for which I long more than I can tell." This is the first sign of soldierly enthusiasm that I have found in his letters. It is not a very vehement enthusiasm even now, if one may judge by the words in which he accounts for it. "I have nothing to amuse me in this country, so I have turned my whole attention to soldiering." This is hardly the tone of his boyhood, when he shouted words of command on the sea-shore, and his dream was of "glory, honour, and promotion." But perhaps in those days professional enthusiasm was not regarded as good form, and his letters were not allowed to show too much of it. His disappointment about the Crimea too may have lessened his first eagerness. However this may be, he goes on to inform his father, with evident pride, that of all the officers of his regiment he alone had been exempted from certain weekly examinations in their duties which had lately been ordered. The examining officer had said to him: "You need not come to examination unless you feel inclined, for you know it all a great deal better than I do." This showed that the young subaltern had made his mark, and that, enthusiastic or not, he was steadily fitting himself for doing good work whenever his chance might come.

Altogether George White faced this move with more hopefulness than regret. He had a warm admiration for his new colonel, Kyle, whom he described as "the *beau ideal* of a Commanding Officer," and he had confidence in himself.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MUTINY.

1857–1860.

THE time was now near at hand when the great storm of the Mutiny was to burst upon our countrymen in India.

That unhappy revolt has often been regarded, even in England, as a national uprising against foreign rule; and its suppression as a final conquest of India by the British. Nothing can be farther from the truth; and, in order that the real position in 1857 may be made clear to readers of this book who have not studied Indian history, it seems desirable, before going on with the story of George White's life, to touch upon some facts which are apt to be forgotten.

India is not, and never has been, a nation. It is a tract of country as large as Europe excluding Russia, and contains as great a variety of geographical features, of climate, and of population. It has mountain-ranges with peaks nearly twice the height of the highest Alps, rising from immense snowfields

and glaciers. The very name of its chief range, the Himalaya, means the Abode of Snow. India also has burning deserts where rain is almost unknown, and jungles where more rain sometimes falls in a week than in England in a year. It has vast alluvial plains, watered by mile-broad rivers, and covered with cultivation and cities; and it has forests where for hundreds of miles the wild elephant still roams in freedom. Its population, like its territory, is as large as that of Europe excluding Russia, numbering more than three hundred millions; and there is at least as much difference between a Pathan from the North and a Madrasi from the South as there is between a Scottish Highlander and a Portuguese. They stand completely apart, in race and colour and character and religion, and the language of the one is wholly unintelligible to the other. Both are "Indians" to the European, just as the Scottish Highlander and the Portuguese are both "Farangis"—Franks, Europeans—in the eyes of the Indian; but the two terms are equally broad and vague.

It is true that India is cut off from the rest of the world by marked geographical boundaries. An immense chain or mass of mountains, something like 1500 miles long, bounds it on the north, the ocean bounds it on the south, and to the east and west the mountain mass throws out ranges which reach practically down to the ocean. It is true also that throughout the enclosed tract one religion, known to us as Hinduism or Brahmanism, has established itself as the prevalent faith—just as Christianity has

established itself in Europe. But the mountain mass is not impassable, especially on the western side, and for thousands of years before the dawn of history fair-skinned "Aryan" races poured down, wave after wave, from Central Asia into the Indian plains, and dominated, though they could not destroy, the dark aboriginal population. In the same way their religion, for Brahmanism was their religion, dominated, without extirpating, the countless faiths of the aboriginal population, until it became a mixture of many different and often conflicting beliefs. It permitted the worship of innumerable gods, and the ordinary Hindu had little knowledge of its inner philosophy. The fair Aryan races, in fact, adopted the gods of the conquered races in addition to their own, just as the Romans did. It is hardly too much to say that a man could worship any god he pleased as long as he revered the Brahman priesthood and did not kill cows. Moreover, Hinduism with all its variations accounts for only two-thirds of the population of India. The great Mahomedan religion broke into India hundreds of years ago, and now numbers sixty or seventy millions of adherents, while the adherents of other religions are nearly as numerous as the entire population of the British Isles. Therefore, though its geographical boundaries have given India, to outside eyes, some measure or appearance of unity, there has been room for the maintenance of many races and languages and creeds. Sir John Strachey tells us that "the differences between the countries of Europe are undoubtedly

smaller than those between the countries of India," and that there is no Indian nation.

Nor is this all. Not only is there no Indian nation, but there is no nation in India. The various countries in India are not nations, and never have been nations, in the European sense of the word. There have been, and there are, feudal chiefships, and tracts where one language is spoken; but no such country as France or Italy, inhabited by a compact organised nation of Frenchmen or Italians, has ever been formed in India.

Whether there may be an Indian nation in the future is another question. India is, in a sense, distinct from the rest of the world, and the British are doing something to unify it and bring about a semblance of national feeling. A recent Indian writer has said that "it will take the Indians a great many years to become a compact and united people, but under the protection of the British Government the soldering has already begun." He may be right. While we are dividing into four nations the forty-six millions of white Christians in the British Isles, we may be welding into one nation the three hundred millions of India, with all their various creeds and colours. But so far India has never been a nation or a company of nations; and that is the essential fact which underlies the whole story of the British Dominion.

If that fact is borne in mind, it becomes possible to understand another and equally important one, that although the British had much fighting to do

in India, and many enemies to conquer, yet their advance to supreme dominion was not a conquest of India properly so called, but depended in large measure upon the goodwill and co-operation of Indians themselves. Many of the races and chiefships of India were never conquered by the British at all; and as regards those who were, it would be difficult to point to a single instance in which the bulk of the victorious army was not composed of Indians enlisting of their own free will under the British flag.

A glance at Indian history will show how this came about.

Long before the Christian era great dynasties of Hindu kings had reigned in India, and more than one had reigned, not over the whole of India, but over a large part of it. Then about a thousand years ago Mahomedan conquerors began to break in from the westward, and finding no combined Indian nation to oppose them, they, too, established powerful dynasties which ruled over vast tracts of Hindu country. Finally, in the sixteenth century, the most famous of these dynasties, that of the Moghuls, established itself in the North, and in the time of our Queen Elizabeth it became under the great Akbar supreme over the larger part of India. The Moghul then seemed to be one of the mightiest monarchs in the world. He was a foreigner, of alien creed, ruling over a population mainly composed of Hindus; but his rule, though founded on conquest, had been strengthened by a wise policy of conciliation, and his splendid empire seemed firmly based upon the

consent of the various Indian races. A constant stream of adventurers from the outside came year by year to keep up the Moghul stock.

It was at this time that the British connection with India practically began. The maritime nations of Europe were then competing for the rich trade of the East, and in the year 1600 Queen Elizabeth gave a charter to the first East India Company. From that time the British in India became more and more firmly established, until at last imperial power fell into their hands. The history of that wonderful achievement falls naturally into two periods. There was first a commercial period, which lasted for about 150 years, until the middle of the eighteenth century. Then there was a period of Indian wars and territorial acquisitions which lasted until the Mutiny of 1857.

During the first period the British were represented by a chartered company, and their object was trade. The Company had to fight for its trade against other European nations, but it did its best to keep clear of fighting with the Indians; and though it had acquired by peaceful means some factories on the Indian coasts, with small tracts of land round them, the heads of the factories were discouraged from obtaining further cessions. "As our object is trade," the Directors wrote, "it is not politic for us to be encumbered with much territory." This state of things lasted until the middle of the eighteenth century; then came a sudden change.

During the previous hundred and fifty years the

mighty empire of the Moghuls had fallen to pieces. Abandoning the conciliatory policy of Akbar they had alienated the loyalty of the Indian peoples. The territories they ruled had one by one broken away from their control, and though the Emperor still retained the shadow of suzerainty he had practically no power at all. India had been parcelled out into a number of independent states, which made war upon each other as they pleased without reference to their nominal overlord. Many, if not most, of these states were ruled by Mahomedan soldiers of fortune, foreigners from beyond the passes, who had established by the sword their control over populations of Hindus. They possessed large disorderly armies, composed, to a considerable extent, of foreign mercenaries. India, in fact, had become a vast field of chronic war, across which armies, aggregating many hundreds of thousands of men, marched and fought and plundered, the trading and agricultural classes submitting to each conqueror and raider in turn, and suffering cruelly.

Among the strongest and most capable of these country powers were the Marattas from the west of India—Hindus—who raided and spoiled among their co-religionists from sea to sea, even as far as Calcutta to the east and Madras to the south. Remnants of the Maratta Ditch, dug to keep them out of the town itself, are still to be seen at Calcutta.

This was the India with which the Company had now to deal, and it is evident that the position was very different from what it had been when the

Moghul Empire was strong. Owing to their wars with other European nations, especially with France, the British now had in India a small, but more or less efficient, force of troops — European and native — against which the armies of the country powers could not stand on equal terms. If conflicts arose it seemed likely enough that both the British and the French might prove to be stronger than any of those powers. This is precisely what happened; and as, owing to superior strength at sea, the British wore down the French, Great Britain eventually became the supreme ruler in India. It is interesting to consider how the first serious step in this direction took place, because it was typical of many conflicts to come.

Though the settlements and the armed strength of the British lay chiefly on the coast, and to the south, about Madras and Bombay, they had a factory at Calcutta, in the great province of Bengal. Fearing a French attack, they fortified this factory. The ruler of Bengal, an Afghan foreigner, took umbrage at their doing so, and marched upon Calcutta. Then followed the tragedy of the Black Hole, when over a hundred English were done to death. The Company at once struck to avenge them. Clive, a fine soldier, was sent up from Madras with a small body of troops, and at Plassy, in 1757, the mercenary rabble of the Bengal ruler was broken and scattered. There was no further resistance, and thus at one stroke the British found themselves masters of a province larger and more populous than England. The Company was alarmed by its success, and tried

the plan of setting up another native ruler under its protection. This proved unworkable, and in 1765 the British assumed the direct administration—thus standing out definitely as a territorial power. This, their first great acquisition of territory, was made possible and easy by the fact that neither India nor Bengal was a nation. The Bengalis, a soft, unwarlike race of Hindus, incapable of standing alone, acquiesced willingly in the overthrow of one foreign ruler by another, who seemed stronger and better; and the Moghul Emperor cared very little who ruled Bengal, which had long been practically independent of him.

The effects of the acquisition of Bengal were of great importance. Not only did it supply the English Company with a large revenue drawn from the land, but it brought them into the valley of the Ganges; and from the earliest times the valley of the Ganges, with its vast fertile plains, had been the seat of the great Indian kingdoms. The British were no longer in the remote south, behind the mountains and rivers which cross the peninsula, but had turned the defences of Hindustan, the Indian name for the country north of the ocean. If they wanted to push forward they had a direct and easy line of advance to the heart of the Moghul Empire. Henceforth Calcutta became the centre of the British power in India, the natural capital.

As a fact, the British did not want to advance. The Company, thinking of its dividends, dreaded wars and increased responsibilities; and the British Parliament, which had now begun to take an interest in

India, formally declared that any further schemes of conquest were repugnant to the wish, the policy, and the honour of the nation. But circumstances proved too strong, and the advance began. It was indeed greatly accelerated by the intervention of Parliament. Such eminent servants of the Company as Clive and Warren Hastings gave place for the future to Governors-General sent out from England, some of them masterful and ambitious men, who showed scant respect for the cautious views of their nominal employers. The result was that, attacked or provoked by one after another of the country powers, the British went on from acquisition to acquisition.

There is no need to follow in detail the wars and annexations of the next seventy years. It is only necessary to remember that India was not a nation, but a gathering of dissimilar and often hostile chiefships, largely ruled by foreigners, and that these chiefships were overthrown by armies which, though officered by Englishmen, were composed mainly of Indian troops. They were stiffened by a few British battalions, but the bulk of the troops were always Indians.

For example, in 1817 there was a war against the Pindaris, a horde of freebooters who had their fastnesses in the central parts of India, and issuing from there used to harry the whole peninsula. They were joined by their fellow-robbers, the Marattas of the west, as also by bands of foreign adventurers, and the British had to assemble against them an army of 120,000 men. Of that army only 13,000 were

British. The rest, nearly nine-tenths, were Indians; and they fought, not against their countrymen, but against enemies who, though certainly for the most part Hindus, had for generations harried and tormented them, and were no more their countrymen than Christian Germans are the countrymen of Christian Frenchmen. They gladly enlisted under the flag of the British Government, which, as Sir Alfred Lyall has said, always paid and usually won. One result of this war was the salvation of the most ancient chiefships in India, the Rajput States, which had been almost destroyed by the Marattas and Pindaris, and had appealed for British aid. They still retain the autonomy which the British Government then saved for them.

So matters went on until, shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century the last of the great independent powers, the Kingdom of the Punjab, wantonly attacked the British, and, after two bloody wars, was subdued and annexed. In 1850, therefore, every State in India had either joined the British of its own accord or had been overthrown in war, and for the first time an Empire had been established which comprised the whole of India. It had been established by the willing co-operation of Indians, and a third of its area, with a quarter of its population, remained under the rule of Indian chiefs.

And throughout this Empire there was peace and order, instead of chronic war and rapine and devastation.

Such was the position in India when our country-

men were called upon to face their great ordeal. But to complete the picture it is necessary to add a few details.

Speaking in general terms, that part of the Indian Empire which had been annexed and brought under direct British rule, was divided into a large number of "districts," which formed the units of administration. Districts varied in size and population, but on an average one of them was about as large as a considerable English county, and contained nearly a million inhabitants. To keep the district in order, administer justice, collect the Government revenue, look after the roads and bridges, and perform the innumerable other duties which in England devolve upon a variety of local authorities, there were two British officers of some standing, the "Magistrate" and the "Collector," who were supported by one or two young English assistants, and a larger number of Indians. Sometimes there would be a Medical officer in charge of the civil population, and if there were any troops in the district there would also be a few Military officers. Possibly there might be a Judge, who would do the more important judicial work of two or three districts. In any case, except at a few stations where there was a considerable garrison, the total number of European officials in a district was small, often not more than half a dozen, sometimes much less.

A group of four or five districts formed a "Division" under a senior officer called a Commissioner; and six or seven divisions or more formed a Province under a Lieutenant-Governor. Over all was the "Government

of India," consisting of the Governor-General and a small executive Council of four or five members. The Government of India not only controlled the administration of the British provinces, but exercised a general supervision over the rulers of the native chiefships. The seat of Government was Calcutta; but in the hot weather the Governor-General moved his headquarters to Simla in the Himalayas, a thousand miles away to the north-west.

It should be remarked that India did not all consist of provinces under lieutenant-governors, but it would be useless to enter into local differences. Throughout British India the district was the administrative unit, and the district officers were the backbone of the administration.

Such was the simple structure of our Indian system, a system under which two hundred millions of people were governed by a few hundred English officers, aided by a larger number of Indians.

To keep order throughout the Empire, and repel aggression from the outside, there was a military force consisting of little more than 40,000 British troops, and about 240,000 Indians under British officers. This force was divided into three sections—the armies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras—these three "Presidencies" having originally been, and still being, more or less independent of one another. Of the three armies, the Bengal army was the largest and most important, numbering in fact two-thirds of the whole. It was not composed of Bengalis proper, who were not a fighting race, but of more northerly races which had

been included in the Bengal Presidency. It may be added that the population of India, though reduced to order, had not been disarmed. Many of the native chiefs kept up considerable bodies of irregular soldiery; and even in British territory most of the villagers carried weapons. The total European population of India, including women and children, was perhaps 100,000.

For any one not acquainted with India it may be useful to imagine the tables turned, and to regard the position from the opposite point of view. Suppose that one of the Indian races, gaining command of the sea, and finding Europe torn to pieces by internal strife, had established there a dominion of similar magnitude.

We should then have an Indian Governor-General with headquarters, say, in Rome, and a summer residence in Norway. Such countries as Italy, France, Germany, and Austria would be provinces under an Indian governor or lieut.-governor. Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal, and many other States, would be still administered by European ruling houses under the general supervision of the Indian Government. To keep the peace of Europe and repel aggression, there would be an Indian army of 40,000 men scattered all over the Continent, with a force of Europeans, officered by Indians, aggregating 240,000, and divided into three sections, the armies of the North, East, and West. The British Isles would form a province under an Indian Lieut.-Governor; Scotland or Ireland would form a division under a

Commissioner; Kent or Devonshire would be a district under a Magistrate and Collector. A whole British county might have not more than five or six Indians in it, and the whole Indian population in Europe, men, women, and children, would be perhaps 100,000 — say one Indian to two thousand Europeans. Moreover, Europeans in general would not be unarmed, but possessed of weapons and accustomed to use them.

It seems evident that the position of the Indian Government in Europe would be a very delicate one, and that even allowing for a great superiority of fighting power on the part of the Indians, the small Indian garrison would, in case of a general combination of Europe against it, a "national" European rising, be rapidly overwhelmed by numbers. That was the position of our countrymen in India in the beginning of 1857.

Now the period of territorial expansion had, as I have said, involved many wars. Of late the larger part of the fighting had fallen to the share of the Bengal army in the north of India. This army was composed of men drawn almost exclusively from Oudh and the North-West Provinces—that is, the central part of the Bengal Presidency. The "sepoys"[1] were mostly Hindus, but there were many Mahomedans among them. The Bengal army held all Northern India, including the newly conquered province of the Punjab; and Northern India with its populous plains

[1] Arabic and Persian, *Sipáh* an army—*Sipáhi* a soldier—the French "Spahi."

and historic cities has always been the seat of Indian Empire.

In the fateful year 1857 careful observers had noticed signs that the feeling in the Bengal army was not altogether what it had been. A spirit of unrest if not of discontent had begun to pervade the ranks, and the demeanour of the men had become less open and respectful. More than one British officer had warned the Government of India that trouble was brewing. No one understood how far the evil had gone, but it was evident that the Bengal sepoy was no longer entirely to be trusted. As a matter of fact, the whole force was honeycombed with disloyalty and ripe for revolt. What were the causes of so great a change in the spirit of the Bengal sepoy, who for generations had done faithful service, is a question which has often been discussed. The question cannot be considered in detail here. But it is perhaps safe to say that the main cause was the gradual awakening of the sepoy to the consciousness of his own strength. In the course of his many wars it had been borne in upon him that the number of British troops in India was very small; and in one unfortunate expedition beyond the North-West passes into Afghanistan, he had learned that British troops were not invincible. Gradually he had become imbued with the belief, not a wholly unreasonable belief, that the British Government could not do without him,—that the continuance of British rule was in fact dependent upon his goodwill. This was a dangerous feeling to be entertained by a mercenary

army serving a ruler of foreign blood. Given a substantial grievance, or perhaps in any case, an army in that frame of mind was sure, sooner or later, to turn upon its masters. Unluckily a substantial grievance was supplied in 1856 by the British annexation of the Kingdom of Oudh, and the extinction of the Indian dynasty, which had been guilty of gross misrule. The measure was probably just, and for the interests of the people; but the Bengal sepoys, a large proportion of whom came from Oudh, preferred the old ways and resented the annexation. From this time discontent and disaffection spread rapidly through the ranks. Then followed the well-known incident of the greased cartridges. The sepoy learned, with sincere horror and alarm, that in loading his musket he was expected for the future to bite off the paper tip of a cartridge which had been smeared with the fat of pigs and bullocks. Whether a Mahomedan, who regarded swine as an abomination, or a Hindu, to whom the cow was sacred, the sepoy took this order as a blow at his religion; and, fanned by disloyal agitators, the smouldering discontent burst into flame. In May 1857 India and England were thrilled by the news that the native troops at Meerut had risen, that many Europeans had been massacred, and that the Imperial city of Delhi was in the hands of the mutineers. Then followed many outbreaks and massacres elsewhere. Nearly the whole of the regular troops of the Bengal army, 100,000 men, broke away; and they were joined by various trained contingents and armed levies. From

first to last certainly more than 200,000 men fought against the British; and large districts were reduced to a condition of anarchy. But the upshot was that although the revolt shook British power for a time, and severely tested the structure which had taken a century to build up, yet in the end the British dominion was left more solid and firmly based than ever.

There remains to be considered the question how it came to pass that a hundred thousand English people, of whom not one-half were soldiers, succeeded in upholding British supremacy amidst a population outnumbering them by two thousand to one. The explanation is not difficult to supply. It has been shown before that the rise of the British Dominion had been largely due to the consent and co-operation of the Indians themselves. This is what gave it its stability in the hour of trouble. The Bengal army revolted and tried to overthrow British rule, and here and there throughout India the mutineers found, as was to be expected, a measure of sympathy. But the sympathy was partial and lukewarm. Not only was the revolt in its essence a military revolt, but it did not extend to the whole of the Indian troops. Even in the Bengal army a few regular corps and many irregular corps and individuals remained "faithful to their salt," while the armies of Bombay and Madras, though perhaps to some extent shaken, never broke away. As to the population in general, there was not, except in Oudh and the neighbourhood, any serious rising against the

British; and the part of India which fell into anarchy, though a very important part, was not one-tenth, probably not one-fifteenth, of the whole. The Indian races in general, justly ruled, and vividly remembering the miseries of former days, were passively if not actively content with their rulers. A few of the minor chiefs and landholders rebelled, but among the chiefs of the great principalities not one threw in his lot with the mutineers. Nor was this all. The Indian princes as a class gave active help to the Government, and from the mass of the population great numbers followed their example. Not only did many of them, at some risk to themselves, save English people from massacre, but as personal servants and camp-followers they served with wonderful courage and devotion. Finally, tens of thousands of Indians voluntarily joined the hard-pressed British soldiery, and fought bravely by their side.

Sepoys of the Bombay and Madras armies formed part, usually the greater part, of British columns which dealt heavy blows. The little Gurkhas, led by their own chiefs, marched down from their mountains to serve against the mutineers. Above all, from the recently conquered province of the Punjab, the men who had fought so stubbornly eight years earlier, tall Sikhs and hardy frontier Mahomedans, flocked to the British standard. Stirred to fury by brutal massacres of English women and children, the British troops fought with extraordinary courage and endurance against overwhelming numbers, but their Indian comrades stood by them well. The

most decisive operation of the whole war, the siege of Delhi, was a striking instance. Of the little British army which held its ground month after month upon the historic Ridge against a force of regular troops vastly superior in numbers, and at last stormed the Imperial city and planted the British flag on the palace of the Moghuls, what proportion consisted of white soldiers? Not one-half—not much more than a third. The rest were natives of India. So it was all over the country. Whatever the mistakes of the British in India, they had ruled justly and well, for the good of the Indian races, and in their hour of trial they had their reward. The Indian races did not fail them. With the willing and faithful help of Indian soldiers the British Empire in India had been built up; with the willing and faithful help of Indian soldiers it was maintained.

That is the true story of the Mutiny.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PUNJAB.

1857–1858.

To return to George White.

There is nothing in his letters regarding the move of the Inniskillings to Nowshera, nor about the outbreak of the Mutiny. Doubtless letters were written which refer to these matters, but they are not forthcoming. It is possible that they never reached their destination, for the country immediately to the south-east of the Punjab was the centre of the revolt, and through it ran the main postal line to Bombay. However this may be, there is a gap in White's letters to England at this time.

The first that I can find, written in 1857, is one dated two months after the outbreak, from the Fort of Attock on the Indus, close to which the railway line now crosses the river. In those days there was no railway in the Punjab; but the main road to Peshawar and the North-West Frontier also crossed the river at this point, and was protected by the

Fort. It was a picturesque old place, but not very well adapted for occupation by European troops in the fierce dry heat of a Punjab summer. Apparently some companies of the Inniskillings had been dropped, or sent back from Nowshera, to hold it, and White was one of the officers with the detachment. He writes to his sister[1]:—

July 13th 1857.

We are in an old ruined native fort which until this row commenced was not a European station, but now on account of the importance of keeping open the communication across the Indus we are victimised, the men are stowed away into places not much bigger than good-sized rat-holes in the walls of the fort, full of snakes & every other creeping thing. Three of us officers live together in a cell about 12 ft. square in which the thermometer averages 100°. Our men have been very sickly lately, one going out with nearly every day, and as there are only two subalterns with the detatchment I am kept pretty busy committing them to the earth. I am as well as possible, in fact I never was better, but this is enough to try anybody's temper. If you can, imagine an old fort on the side of a high hill, on the slope down towards the river, nearly in ruins, the inside one mass of loose stones, and built on a rock and entirely surrounded by rocks, which get so hot that you cannot keep your hand on them, even at sunrise in the morning, when they have had the whole night to cool, they are quite hot; but what I most object to are the swarms of creeping things; at night I dress, put on gloves & every thing else to try to keep off musquitoes & sand flies, but to no purpose; indeed, I and everybody else

[1] For some years longer White's punctuation continued to be careless, and at times confusing. It has not been thought necessary to follow him exactly in this respect, and a few stops have been added where the sense seemed to require it.

in Fort Attock lie awake all night, and the consequence is that we are asleep all day. We constantly see scorpions make their appearance from some crevice in the wall, besides the whole place is full of holes made by cannon shot in the time of the Sikh rule. Altogether it is a cheerful place to pass a hot weather. . . .

The affair is spreading. It appears to be nearly entirely a Mussulman affair, but thousands of Hindoos have been led into it, either through hope of plunder or hatred of the Faringee soors (white pigs), as they politely call us. In fact this affair will never be settled until the right man is in the right place—viz., G. S. W., Commander-in-Chief in India. Delhi has not yet fallen, or rather I should say we have not yet heard of its fall. . . .

We only heard reports—nothing is known for certain; it is wonderful how much sooner the blacks get the news of anything going on than we do, nobody seems to be able to ascertain the cause, but I can vouch for the fact. For instance the natives in the Bazaar told us we would move to Attock from Nowshera on the 8th of July two days before—viz., on the 6th, and we, sure enough, got the order on the 8th to move to Attock that night. They now say we are to go on to Rawul Pindee but I fear that is too good news to be true. I wish they would move us any where, I don't care where, they cannot send us to another place so bad. . . .

I wonder what we will do next cold weather, we most likely will have a campaign to retake all the country that we have lost. I fear the Inniskillings will not take part in it. We always flattered ourselves that if there would be anything to do that we were the first regiment would be sent, but this affair seems to have found us so utterly unprepared, that when it did come nobody knew what to do. It almost passes belief that a lot of soldiers (if the term may be applied to sepoys) should be able to get up a thing of this sort from Calcutta to Peshawur without those in authority knowing anything about it. The niggers now say

if we are not driven out of India this year that they will have to wear our yoke for ever. I fancy they will rather, they are entirely led on by what they believe to be their fate or *Kismud* as they call it here, and when once they find that it is not likely to turn out according to their expectations they will lose all heart and disperse. They are indeed a strange race, these men who have not pluck with treble the numbers to stand before Europeans walk up to the scaffold with the most perfect indifference because it is their *Kismud*.

Since writing the above we have received news of the Mutiny of the 46th N.I. at Sealkote: they have murdered many of my old friends there. The Sikhs in this regiment left immediately they broke into open mutiny. Throughout the whole affair the Sikhs have stuck by us most manfully; they hate the down-country men sincerely; they (Sikhs) are by much a finer race than the others and hold them in the most thorough contempt as soldiers.

The Sikhs of the Punjab had been conquered eight years before with the aid of the "down-country men," who formed the bulk of the Bengal Army. A great military brotherhood rather than a race, the Sikhs were intensely proud of their fighting powers; and believed, with some reason, that but for the guns and the white men, they would have swept over the sepoys, and plundered the rich cities of Hindustan. They bitterly resented the taunts of the eastern men, whom they regarded, as White says, with contempt; and in 1857 they gladly joined the British in order to pay off old scores.

But the "Purbea," the easterner, was not wanting in pluck, and fought well at times even in the Mutiny, when he was without capable officers. He felt that

he could not with equal numbers stand up against the horrible energy of the white man, but his feeling seemed to be one of semi-superstitious awe rather than physical fear.

To John White.

FORT ATTOCK,
August 28th, 1857.

All letters from home come burthened with complaints from you about my not answering your letters. Now the amusing part of the affair is this (viz.) that your UNANSWERED!!! letters never arrive. I have not seen your handwriting (and very bad it used to be) for the last year & a half, at least as well as I can remember. With reference to your bad handwriting I presume it is a sign of Genius.

The Fortnight passed since last I wrote has been spent by me in the above-mentioned paradise. And as we are entombed here in a fort built some say by Alexander the Great (d—n him) we don't see much variety.

. . . . . .

We have disarmed every sepoy in the Peshawur valley and hundreds of them (who have been caught in treasonable correspondence or who have otherwise committed themselves) are working here on roads in chains; they are now reaping the fruits of their audacious attempt. We have here besides over three hundred disarmed sepoys, whom we expect some day to make a bolt of it. We, *i.e.* 27th, have only three companies here; the light company are told off to go in pursuit at a moment's notice under command of your humble servant . . .

Since last I wrote I have purchased a very fine Cape horse for £80 from Colonel Ellice of the 24th, who was very badly wounded by the mutineers at Jhelum; he came out from the

Cape with us in the *Maidstone*—and is since greatly improved (the horse I mean, not Col. Ellice). . . .

My friend Twemlow has been ill at Peshawur, and I have written to know if he would like to come here for a little as I could go & do his work for a short time—I don't know whether he will or not. I rather think it would be "Out of the Frying Pan into the fire"—but the change might be beneficial to him.

Two fellows of ours passed through here going on leave to the Hills on Sick Certificate yesterday, neither of them able to stand. When I came into the room they did not know me. The first fellow I went up to would not shake hands with me, thinking I had made some mistake and mistaken him for somebody else, and when he found out who I was, said "By George you ARE the personification of health and strength." My breadth now is nearly as great as my height, which is six feet, and I have cultivated a very big pair of whiskers since I was last with the Head Quarters of the Regiment, which disguised me. My moustache won't make a respectable appearance yet. I think I have told you all about myself now. I hear it reported that you are growing like me, or rather like what I used to be; if so you must be a good-looking fellow, but I would advise you to drop the likeness now, as I have lost all right to be called good-looking. I now present the appearance of a man cut out for hard work & rough fare, but my drawing-room days have gone by.

This letter throughout savours slightly of EGOTISM, but in the Army the Motto is take care of yourself for nobody else will do it for you. When you next write to me direct your letter to one Geo. S. White, and think of what you are writing, and not of some Mathematical problem. I would make a bet that the letters you say I never answered are lying in the Dead Letter Office directed (in an absent fit) to The Hypothenuse of a Right-Angled Triangle or some other such interesting gentleman.

Till Death yours,

GEORGE S. WHITE.

To Miss F. White.

CAMP,
NOWSHERA, *March 8th* (1858).

We are once more on the move and have the anticipation of a pleasant & cool! march to Umballa. The Left Wing of the 81st marched in here this morning to relieve us, but we do not expect to be able to get under way for another week, and then we have six weeks' march before us, which taking halts into consideration will bring us into Umballa somewhere about the first week in May. The regiment was considered too sickly to remain in Peshawur Valley, so by way of restoring our health they have given us a hot weather march. They won't let us fight, so they are determined to kill us some other way. I have quite got over the Peshawur fever & ague & am game to go anywhere. I have nothing to do on the march whatever; being Instructor of Musketry my work is all in the cold weather, so that I shall try and get away as soon as we get to Umballa, to the Hills if possible.

I will write if I am ill, so let the Mother know that no news is good news, also don't let her think that we are going to fight. No such luck in store for us. I employ my time now in studying for the Staff College when I am not employed studying Hindustani. It would be a fine thing for me to get into the above-named institution, it would give me a fine long time at home, viz. 18 months leave to begin with, then two years at Sandhurst, then another year with Cavalry & Artillery.

It will be seen that the share taken by the Inniskillings in the suppression of the Mutiny had been small. Their bad luck in losing chances of active service seemed to be persistent. But, though they had no fighting to do, they formed part of a body of British troops which rendered useful service of

another kind, securing the Punjab, and disarming several regiments of the Bengal army which formed part of the Punjab garrison. Though the Sikhs disliked and despised the Purbeas, it is not improbable that the presence of these British troops in the great frontier province had something to do with the attitude of the population, which was of the greatest importance to the whole of India. Any disorder in the Punjab would have been a calamity—perhaps a fatal calamity; and the Sikhs, though dominant, did not compose the whole, or even a majority, of the population. There, as elsewhere, it was necessary to show the flag, and prove to the people that the British troops had not all been swept away by the flood of rebellion. As it was, the Punjab not only held firm, but sent many thousands of hardy fighting men to join in subduing the rebels.

CHAPTER VIII.

UMBALLA.

1858–1861.

THE Mutiny operations were by no means at an end when the Inniskillings marched into Umballa in the hot weather of 1858. Much fighting remained to be done in the north-west provinces and Oudh and Central India before the revolt was finally crushed out. Large roving bands of mutineers had still to be broken up or captured, and the tracts of country which had been so terribly devastated by the storm had to be restored to order and prosperity. But the main rebel armies had been defeated and dispersed; large reinforcements of British troops had been received by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Colin Campbell; and the end was in sight.

Even then, although the main operations of the war were over, the Inniskillings must have chafed at the peaceful *rôle* they were called upon to play; but about Umballa all was quiet, and there was no need for their services in the southern columns. Throughout the summer of 1858 they remained inactive, and they bore

no part in the final winter campaign by which Sir Colin Campbell, now become Lord Clyde, wore down the Oudh rebels, and stamped out the last flicker of armed resistance.

George White's letters therefore deal with no feats of war, but with personal matters.

The "purchase system," with all its curious anomalies, was at that time in force, and more than one of his letters refer to it. On the 17th July 1858 he writes to his father—

UMBALLA, *July 17th*, '58.

I want you to write & find out all about my name being returned for purchase of a Company. There are several steps flying about, and nobody knows who is for purchase & who is not. Now it might so happen that a Company might go without anybody knowing anything about it. For instance, a short time ago the junior lieutenant of the 87th went over all the others because his money was forthcoming when asked for, although lots of his seniors thought their money was all right. There are two steps going in the regiment now, 1st Touzels (expected) & Barnes (certain), and nobody knows who will get them, the seniors have been returning their names for purchase & withdrawing them again as the chances of a 2nd battalion were bad or good, so that most of them really don't know whether they are for purchase or not. I wish you would write to Cox and return my name (if not returned), and also ask him if that prevents the possibility of anybody purchasing over my head; this can do no harm and it is possible it might save a very great disappointment hereafter. . . .

I am now acting Adjutant as well as Instructor of Musketry, Twemlow having gone away to the Hills on ten days' leave. There is to be a great ball at Simla to-morrow night, which was his great inducement I fancy. Between my two capacities

I have plenty of occupation this nice cool weather; however I am as well as ever I was. Capt. Creagh was about right in saying I stood the climate better than any other officer of the regiment, at least as I am bearing it now & also when he saw me about this time last year at Attock, but if he had seen me three months afterwards he would not have made so favourable a report. I was very ill at Peshawur, & also at Nowshera I suffered more than any of the rest—the wonderful part of it is that I am now so completely restored to my former self as far as health is concerned, but I think my bloom has fled for aye. I was taken for a Major of the regiment a day or two ago.

There was at this time considerable anxiety in England at the idea of a French invasion. Our army at home, always weak in numbers, had been further weakened by the necessity for sending out the large reinforcements required in India; and as generally happens when England finds herself involved in a distant war, the nations of Europe showed clearly that their sympathies were not with her. In various parts of the Continent there was open rejoicing over the calamities which had overtaken us, calamities which were said to be the rightful punishment for our cruel oppression of the Indian peoples. We were no more popular then with other nations than we were when the Boer War broke out forty years later. And, in spite of the fall of Delhi, and our other successes, it was very generally believed, as well as hoped, that we should in the end be overwhelmed in India. The French, then the first military power in Europe, had been our allies in the Crimean War a few years earlier, and for a time the camaraderie between French and

English soldiers, which that war brought about, had done something to remove or conceal the long-standing antagonism of the two nations. But the Crimean War had also given rise to some jealousies, and in any case the old feelings were too deep to be easily eradicated. There was now a reaction against us, and a part of the French army showed so hostile an attitude that it seemed doubtful whether Louis Napoleon would be able to restrain them. The fear of invasion was for a time so acute as to lead to the Volunteer movement.

On the 9th August 1858 George White writes to his brother on the subject, with the vehemence of three-and-twenty—

> How the devil do you and others write so cooly & collectedly and never mention a thing about the French? Jove! "Where ignorance is bliss," etc., so you people (seem ?) to think. Were I in England I should be studying in every way to pass off as a Frenchman in order to save myself when the monsieurs arrive, and arrive they will some day; it is only a question of time, at least if we don't take some steps to prevent it, which it seems rather difficult to do, as recruits cannot be got; however, let those entrusted with the safety of the country say so, and let other measures be adopted.
>
> How I hate that nonsense that is talked with regard to a French invasion; if you say anything about such a thing you have some infernal old fool shouting "Impossible," "Nonsense," "If they were to get in they would never get out"; in the name of all that is holy what is to keep them from coming? Steam has made them nearly our equals on the water, and it would only be a question of one tide—take a map and look at Cherbourg. The warning voice sounded by the 'Times' was one not to be passed by with a sneer.

And yet what effect had it? *A* fool, an idiot, a d—d traitor (I should not have used *A*. Substitute *A lot* and you will be nearer the truth) gets up in the house to say we never were on more friendly terms with France than we now are, what can friendly terms have to say to it? Do they suppose Napoleon is such a fool as to make war with England when he can help it? not a bit of it; but the question is how long can he help it, how long will that Hydra his army keep quiet without employment? Napoleon is a fine fellow, but no Hercules to chop off its hundred heads with his own hands! He will say this army must be employed, or they will employ themselves in playing old Harry with me. The next question is where can they be best employed? An echo answers England; then comes the question, where would they go themselves with the greatest enthusiasm? A still small voice, or rather a loud strong voice, shouts — against the *Got dam Anglais*. The next question is not so easy to answer. Master Nap. will think— viz., "Where am I to get the money?" one G. S. W. can't tell him; but as to the absurd idea of *friendly relations*, do they think, no, they cannot think themselves, they only want us to think, that present Friendly relations mean that when Napoleon finds the time come he will write over and say, "My dear Palmerston, or my dear Derby, etc., my army wants to fight you, and I cannot prevent them, so I will give you six months to get ready. I intend to come in at Portsmouth, as that is one of your strongest places, in order to give you fair play." No, he will come like a thunder-cloud, his army would be in England forty-eight hours after the arrival of the declaration of war. But you may say he must find an excuse for a declaration of war; I answer in the words of Frederick the Great (*a more scrupulous man than Napoleon*): "Give me the money to make war, and I will buy a pretext for *half a crown*." What said the great Wellington? the iron duke, who never appealed to *feeling*, and who despised such a thing — he sacrificed his pride,

thinking that his last speech might have some effect, saying it is most likely the last time I may address this house, and at the same time "he prayed that he might not live to see the horrors he foretold," and what effect has *his* fearful warning had? (I am wrong in saying "his warning"; it was a warning from the Almighty spoken by his chosen servant, whom he had made use of on a former occasion as the Saviour of the Nation); what effect had it? None!! His warning appears to have died with him—in his despair he asked for only 5000 more men (I think), and they would not give them; if he was not minded who would be, "though one rose from the dead"? What says Napier, the clear-sighted, far-seeing Charles Napier, the prophet of the Indian Mutinies? I quote from his life by his brother: "Napoleon has the power [written, mind you, in '52, and if he had the power then, What has he now?] and it will be more easy for him to make war than to keep peace."

I have a most unbounded faith in Napier; I consider him a greater genius than Wellington, and altogether I like him better. He (Napier) always said the Russians would try for Constantinople; well, he was not far wrong there, but that was easily seen; he prophesied the Sepoy Mutinies & named Delhi as the place where they would make their first stand, and he has declared the probability of a French invasion; his two first have come true. "The second woe is past, the third woe cometh quickly."

I hope you won't think me quite mad, but I think more of these matters than most soldiers (young ones, at least), and as I don't get an opportunity of holding forth to people who would give me credit for anything except madness, I find it a pleasure to talk to you, as it were. I don't care if you laugh till you are black in the face; you may fancy, because you are a learned man & that style of thing, and also because it is the fashion to think so, that a soldier must be a fool and has no right to think; but there are many soldiers can see as far through a stone wall as any civilian;

particularly amongst the privates you meet sharp, shrewd fellows, who not only think but speak for themselves.

I find I am working myself into a passion at the idea of your laughing at me, which is a thing I don't like to give way to, as a man, let him be soldier or civilian, is always a fool when in a passion.

What a young devil you used to be in your fights with Sibby, but she was always worse. Do you remember when she knocked your head against the leg of the table, crying at the same time, & shouting as an accompaniment to the first whack or note—"Now are you dead?" 2nd whack (with spirit), "Will that kill you?" I fancy I hear your head coming in contact with the mahogany. It is a strange thing how forcibly these absurd sort of things recur to one's memory. At the recollection of things of this sort I sometimes get the most uncontrollable fits of laughter. I don't know whether I mentioned it writing home, but I think I did, how one night when lying out on the mountain ibex shooting, the snow all round me, I somehow saw in my mind's eye Edward Evans as his face *ought* to have been in my situation, & I roared laughing till my shikaree (my only companion) thought Shaitan or the devil had taken possession of me body & soul. Can an Oxford scholar decipher the above written in Persian? surely there is nothing beyond the scope of his mighty mind—don't mind me the foregoing was caused by jealousy. I always was most awfully disgusted when I was beat at anything, but talking of jealousy reminds me of a note received from an Anglo-Indian tailor by one of our officers, who had written to the said tailor informing him that a uniform coat he had made for him would not go on his back. (*I* never saw such a coat.) The tailor wrote back: "I got your letter full of grievances, and can only say that it seems to have been prompted by *petty jealousy*"—this will give you some idea of the insolence of some of these gentlemen, which is quite unbearable. I sold one of them a bargain a day or two

ago; he had been accused of knowing of the outbreak at Sealkote before it took place, & of taking advantage of his knowledge to save his property; however, he wrote me a very cheeky note (a dun) for 70 Rps. I wrote back: "Dear Bax. I would have sent you the money long ago had I not thought you were hanged." I hope there will be a row about it. I would like it to go to the C. in C. I could write such cheek about it without committing myself, but I think it will hit him too hard for him to publish it. I sat down to write intending only to finish one sheet, & now I could write on for a week had I not some regard for the reader.—Yours ever,

GEO. S. WHITE.

The beginning of the letter had been as follows:—

UMBALLA, *August 5th*, '58.

A thousand thanks for your long letter from Oxford giving an account of all your doings both on the water and also on the firmer element. I am not up to Latin quotations such as "terra firma." Is this correctly spelt? I have a kind of contempt for the Classics generally, which I consider so much time thrown away. This is an ignorant soldier's opinion, and must be pardoned accordingly by one who can appreciate the beauties of the swell writers of former times. But to be serious, I am really very much obliged by your writing me so long a letter, & I wish you would write to me more often than you do; the more homely the style the more I shall like it. Don't sit down and say "Oh! I have nothing to write about." I don't care in the least for descriptions of festive scenes or anything of that kind; write to me whatever comes into your head as if you were conversing; nothing I hate so much as a letter with about two lines on one subject, then a stop, and then some other event for which the memory has been wracked. Nothing can be worse than this. . . .

To his mother.

UMBALLA,
March 5th, 1859.

I have been working away like a horse all the cold weather, at Musketry chiefly, but I have done a good deal in the amusement line as well. I don't know whether to say I have been disappointed about the Adjutancy or not, but I am not Adjutant, as I expected to be. I forget whether I told you that I have had some misgivings about it for some time, but I was put out of suspense by last English mail. Thomas, who commands the regiment, heard from the Horse Guards in answer to his recommendation of me to the following effect: "That as Capt. Barnes's step had gone by purchase and Lieut. Twemlow's money was not forthcoming, there would be no vacancy for the Adjutancy." The only thing that I regret much is having bought an expensive horse, which I could have done without. However, he will bring his price when I wish to sell him, but he is such a beauty that I don't like parting with him, particularly as I was unlucky enough to knock up my other charger at the Umballa races. I put Patton of my regiment up on him in a hurdle race, which he won easily, but he ran away with him afterwards and pulled up dead lame, and has been useless ever since. His back sinew is greatly enlarged, & I doubt much if he will ever be quite sound again. I want my father to lodge no end of money for me at Cox & Co.; to tell the truth, I have been very extravagant on the idea of £600 a year as Adjutant. . . .

Now for my history since my last communication. About every third day we have had some sort of gaiety or other—picnics, archery meetings, balls, theatricals, etc., etc., including photografing meetings. I join in all these things, though I seldom can find time from my duties to attend in the day-time. I have really more work than is good for me. I never was so thin or light since I left Sandhurst as I am now. I don't weigh 11 stone. For the last two days I have been 20 hours on parade, viz., 10 hours each day. Now, even in the cold weather, such constant exposure to the sun is very

wearing. I have to be present at every shot that is fired, and instead of having six months to get through the work in I have only had a little over two, owing to the targate not being ready at the beginning of the season. I sometimes am at work at six in the morning, & don't get away till 12, then again from 2 till dark, after which, about once a week, I commence dancing at 10, & keep it up till four in the morning —have one hour in bed & up again & at Musketry. However, I receive the greatest consideration from the Commanding officer on all occasions. I am entirely my own master, and never interfered with. I am a sort of Musketry Colonel. They have found out that they cannot drive me, and that when other people interfere with me that I am the worst officer in the service, but leave me alone & do what I ask & there is no trouble I won't take.

I acted the other day in a theatrical performance, "The Valet Do Sham," in which I played Capt. Trivet. I was well received, although it is by no means a brilliant part. I wrote a prologue for the play, which I send to you & which was most enthusiastically cheered. I could scarcely make myself heard, and I have had to write about a dozen copies of it for friends (lady friends, of course). Without knowing the parties mentioned, you won't be able to appreciate it, but I hope you will think it worthy of the fool of the family. It won't, of course, read well, as it was only written for recital. I spoke it myself, got up like a professor, with white tie, gloves, etc.

The prologue, to tell the truth, was nothing very remarkable; and it was so full of local allusions that there is no need to quote it here. What is better worth quoting is an extract from White's next letter, which shows what was always a pleasant feature of his character, his strong family affection.

To his mother.

UMBALLA,
Commenced March 24th, 1859.

I got your two letters together, one dated Jany. 31st, the other Feby. 8. I cannot tell you what pleasure they both gave me. I have nobody or nothing on earth that I care for except my own family, & it is a real pleasure to me to know that I have never given them a pang of regret on my account. I have often been angry with myself after having written home at the style I have adopted, but I am strangely altered since I came out to India as a boy, and at times I am really more of a demon in temper than a man; nobody sees it, because I have myself perfectly drilled; but even this has its bad effect, viz., that, instead of passing over quickly, it lasts for days, during which I must say my life is a perfect burthen to me. If I have read your two last letters once, I have read them a hundred times. The few lines at the end of your letter of the 8th from my father gave me joy. It is long since I have seen his handwriting. I wish he would occasionally write me a line at the end of your letter. I never have the slightest difficulty in reading his writing; but don't ask him if it is a labour to him.

White's next letter is written from his old headquarters at Sialkot, where he had been attending a musketry school and had "obtained a first-class certificate of qualification as an instructor of musketry." In fact, he passed first of the whole school. It is evident from this, and from his nomination for the adjutancy of his regiment, that he had not been idle, and that his reputation as a regimental officer was not a bad one. Nevertheless, he loved sport of all kinds, and especially, perhaps, mountain shooting, for which his long wiry frame and chronically hard condition

made him well suited. At this moment he was contemplating six months' leave for a shooting trip in Kashmir, then the paradise of sportsmen. It is said that the glens and ravines of that beautiful country, one of the most beautiful in the world, have now been to a great extent "shot out," and that the sport is nothing to what it used to be; but it used to be such, long after White wrote, that I have known a keen sportsman spend two-thirds of his month's "privilege leave" in very rough travel, year after year, for the sake of ten days in a Kashmir "nullah." No wonder it appealed to George White. He writes on the 21st April 1859 to his father, who had by that time become the owner of "Whitehall"—

SEALKOTE,
April 21*st*, 1859.

The game I go in pursuit of are principally Ibex. They are about the most rare species of game, something the style of the Alpine Chamois, but I fancy harder to get. They are splendid animals, with such heads and horns and an ever watchful eye, and require great stalking. Bara Sing (or the stag with 12 horns) is the second most desirable animal I intend to try for, with horns that would fill a room, and as big as a bull. These I will find more in the forests on the hill sides. Bears I don't care about; you might as well shoot so many apple dumplings—great stupid, grunting beasts. I think I ought to be successful. I have paid £70 for my rifles, and my eye and hand have a marvellous fellow-feeling when the rifle is at my shoulder. I am strong enough to walk for ever, which is, after all, the great requisite, at least that and perseverance—shooting in Cashmere is not like shooting in South Africa, where you kill half a dozen Elephants in a day. In Cashmere you may wander about for weeks and never see a head of game. I cannot answer for my patience. I am

afraid I may break down in that; if so, I shall go to Muree, buy some good clothes, and plunge into society, such as it is. . . .

You should see the floor of my room; it is regularly covered with rifles, guns, pistols, hunting knives, bullets, powder, 15 lbs. of tea—I keep up my old love for that—a great big loaf of sugar weighing 25 lbs., 9 ounces pickles, preserved soups, potted meats, 2 dozen of brandy, 2 dozen of port wine—the latter in case of sickness—lots of quinine, castor oil, medicines of all kinds, six flannel shirts, entire suit of sporting duds of the same colour as the stones, about 2 dozen worsted socks, lots of bedding, and such a jolly little bed that takes to pieces & goes into a thing not bigger than a sponge-bag (my own plan—I hope it won't break), 4 books, viz.—Bible, writing-book & paper, journal and sketch-book, & Moore. My object is to go as light as possible, both for cheapness and convenience. The first question every year when a man comes down from the hills is: Who made the best bag in Cashmere this year? I only hope the answer may be White of the 27th, or Quasmund, as some fellows call me, from my great strength (*vide* Hiawatha). . . .

Whether White's trip was as successful as he hoped there is nothing to show; but a photograph of him possibly taken at this time represents him, with a heavy pair of whiskers, in shooting costume, surrounded by bear skins and heads of ibex and markhor. At all events, by Christmas he was back in Umballa, contemplating without much pleasure a visit to the station from the Governor-General, Lord Canning, and the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Clyde. The ceremonials attending such visits, "tamáshás," to use the Indian word, were disagreeable to White, who was still shy and retiring. Lord Roberts, who

knew him in his early Indian days, described him to me as being at that time "very reserved." But he had no cause to regret this particular tamáshá, which brought him into notice and resulted in his advancement to a post on the Staff. He had lately passed an examination in Eastern languages—another proof that with all his keenness for sport he was not neglecting more serious matters,—and this no doubt helped him. He writes to his sister on the 15th January 1860—

I don't know whether it was before or after I last wrote that I heard officially that I had passed in the Persian & Hindustani examination. Twelve officers of the Queen's service passed, fourteen spun, and two were prevented from ever going up again for copying. I was pretty confident before I went up; it is an odd thing that I never failed in any examination I have ever gone up for even at Sandhurst, where we had examination nearly every day. To the best of my memory I never spun at one of them, altho' I have gone up perfectly certain that I would fail, and altho' hundreds of fellows with twice my ability & application and who were much better up in the subjects used constantly to spin.

I don't know whether you will be glad or sorry at home to hear that I had hardly heard two days of my having passed when the Military Secretary wrote about an appointment in the Quartermaster-General's department. This is of all others the branch of the service I should like, as it is the most difficult, and the Colonel has recommended me very strongly, and I have also been pressing the Adjutant-General into my service. I hope I may get it. The post does not go for three days yet, and perhaps I may know something definite before that time. Once on the Staff of the army always on the Staff, so that everything would be an opening, and I should

be a fool to refuse it; besides, the pay will be a great addition. I don't know anything about it so far, I mean to what place I would be likely to be sent, &c., &c. . . .

January 30th.

I see I have given you notice of the approach of the swells; they have all departed, leaving me! Deputy Assistant Quarter-master-General of the Army.

I have been appointed to Allahabad, where for the future you may direct your letters. Sir Robert Garret put in a good word for me, otherwise I should not have got the appointment. I am afraid it will be a great disappointment to you, as it will prevent my going home (if my health stands) for a long time. I should myself, of course, if I consulted *my own inclination*, go home and either try for an exchange or come out again to the regiment, but I might be many years in the service & not get the offer of so good an appointment again. Everybody is calling out about so good an appointment being given to a subaltern who has not seen a shot fired. I will have plenty to do at Allahabad, which I am glad of, as it will give me a chance of doing it well and getting a name. . . .

What I want now is my company. I wish I could get a chance of purchasing it. Once a captain & on the Staff I ought to get on in case of service of any kind. I will tell you honestly that Allahabad is not as good a climate as the one I am at present in, but I hope not to be left long there, and I have now arrived at my full strength of constitution and ought to be acclimatised by this time, as I am in my sixth year of Indian service; besides, I am a regular liver and always take a lot of exercise. I think I am about the only man not Scotch who has got anything from Lord Clyde.

White was at this time troubled in mind by the altered demeanour of the British soldier in India, and

the apparent decrease in discipline. His views are the views of a subaltern of less than twenty-five, and he did not perhaps know the serious grounds which the British soldier had for discontent, but his letter to his mother on the subject is worth quoting:—

ALLAHABAD, *March* 1860.

There is a spirit of insubordination and mutiny very strongly developed amongst the soldiers in India; in fact, the Army is not what I remember it when first I joined it. . . .

You cannot treat soldiers as you would other men; they have already out here dictated terms to their superiors, & it will take a Napier or a Wellington to make them forget that. Do you know what the whole secret of discipline is? what is derisively called "Pipe Clay." Depend upon it, the more Pipe Clay the more discipline. The regiment that has its hair cut to the eighth of an inch in accordance with regulation will excite ridicule amongst civilians, but that is the secret of keeping soldiers under command. It was a long time before I would believe my own experience on this head as it is so degrading to human nature, but by the beard of the prophet it is a fact; this system of educating soldiers will end in the overthrow of the English monarchy. Oh, you may laugh; but when you are called "citoyenne" instead of Mrs White you'll say that fool George said so.

Give me the dear old soldiers who had to bring their letters to their officers to read for them, men of six feet high, who had not an idea beyond their captain & their colours.

I am living in a very out-of-the-way place here, but somehow or other a drunken British soldier found his way here the other day & demanded grog; the amount of 100 tots are the allowance for 100 men in one day. When the fellow, pushing aside my servant, came into my house I asked him what he wanted. Answer—"I'm a British soldier & I want my grog." I said, "You had better be off out of this sharp if

you don't want me to have you put into the nearest guard-room." The brute looked at me with the utmost composure & said he wasn't going until he got his grog. I had been exercising, as I usually do every day, & was in good wind, so I took the fellow by the neck of his coat & seat of his breeches & sent him flying out of the door. I did not make any demonstration of attack before I got hold of him, but when he got up outside he stood up again, & I, thinking he wanted more, was going to give him a little of the biceps, when he took to his heels and cut like a demon, & my belief is he's running still, but a case like this could not have occurred ten years ago; a soldier would have as soon thought of hanging himself as walking into an officer's house in that manner.

White's staff appointment did not turn out to his taste, and before he had been in it many weeks he came to the conclusion that he would resign it as soon as he could properly do so. Meanwhile he found Allahabad a depressing place. Cholera was at that time a fearful scourge among our English troops, and the regiments in Allahabad were suffering severely. White writes that

instead of going out of your house to get into spirits, the first thing you hear is the Dead March from generally two different regiments in opposite directions wending their slow and solemn step to the graveyard. The cholera is holding its revels among the troops here. A rich harvest may be expected before many months are over. The ground is already well prepared.

As his letters show, White had for some time thought of taking leave to England. The fact was that he was getting tired of India and wanted a

change "home." The longing that comes after a time to every Englishman for a sight of the old country had come upon him. Nevertheless when a chance of congenial work and advancement in India was held out to him he was inclined to take it. During and after the Mutiny there was a great opening for young men in military commands with Indian troops, and in various kinds of civil work; and White was tempted by the idea of making a career for himself in some new line of service where he could get rapid promotion. He writes to his mother:—

When I had made up my mind to cut home & fully intended sending in for leave, the last day of the month what should come but a letter from the Private Secretary to Sir R. Montgomery, Lieut.-Govr. of the Punjab, asking if I had passed in the languages, & if so what appointment I would like. I wrote back I should *like* command of a regiment, but that liking & getting were different things, but that I should be very much obliged to Sir R. Montgomery if he would be kind enough to give me any appointment he might select himself, & strongly hinted that no matter what it was I would do it better than anybody else, which appears cheeky but is nevertheless fact. I now await the result. I said one thing is very certain—I cannot bear my present appointment. If I am offered a good appointment, why, I'll stay; if not, I'll go home. I am able to fill any appointment in India with the exception of those requiring an intimate acquaintance with native intrigue, which, thank goodness, I know nothing about. I think His Excellency will be a little surprised at my reply; I don't care one penny (a coin I have not seen for 6 years) whether I get anything or not. I'm sick of everything Eastern; I want to eat strawberries instead of Mangoes this summer. . . .

March 27th.

I am a fatalist to a great extent. Surely Something brighter must be in store for me. So far I have seen little of the bright side of life, if it has a bright side. I have been singularly unlucky in not seeing service of any sort, and have no prospect of seeing any. . . .

No copy of White's letter to Sir Robert Montgomery's private secretary is to be found; he had not yet arrived at the point when one keeps copies; but his letter to his mother and another to his father of the 1st April, 1860, show that he had not been unduly modest in his suggestions, also that he was prepared if he got a good opening to give up soldiering altogether. Like most young men who have missed a chance or two of seeing active service, he thought the era of war had ceased, and that he would never get another chance. What he wanted from Sir Robert Montgomery, he tells his father, was a "command of something, I don't care what, but Sir R. may think this too high a flight for a beginner; if so, I would be obliged if he would give me a second in command in the Punjab, cavalry if possible." . . . "I also mentioned an appointment in the Woods and Forests." . . . "I also said I hated my present appointment."

He explains to his father some of the drawbacks to this appointment. One need not accept as strictly accurate all that a man of five-and-twenty thinks about the methods of the authorities; but the letter is characteristic.

ALLAHABAD, *April 1st*, 1860.

I have been cut 315 Rupees, £31, since I came here for sticking up for poor soldiers' wives and giving an order for their baggage to be given up to them. However, I'll get the money back, I expect, by fighting. I had two rather alarming letters one morning—one about the above asking by what authority I had ordered the baggage to be given up without the carriage of it from Calcutta being paid; this I am fighting. The other was demanding authority for my giving a brigadier-general a passage to Calcutta at the public expense. This I explained, and I have not been cut for it, & I don't expect I shall. The other I will win also if there is any truth in the value of importunity. If I don't get it I will make the Govt. pay for it in franks of the letters I'll write about it "On the public service." This retrenching a man's pay in India is an awful do. You are never safe, sometimes two years after you have got a month's pay it is all retrenched for some reason or other. When one is with their regiment it seldom happens, as you have nothing to do that the Auditor-General can take hold of, but the moment you get into a responsible position then down he comes on you with a rush. He has about 100 babus (native clerks), who get a percentage on everything they discover that can be retrenched from the pay & allowances of officers, so you may be sure they don't let many things slip through their fingers. It's a dirty trick, is it not? Even the Cr.-in-Chief gets cut; he has no authority over the Audit department.

On this account most Staff officers in this country won't undertake any responsibility. I always do, & will to the end of the chapter. I suppose I will lose by it in the end, but if I think it for the public good I'll do it & fight it afterwards. A great thing in life is to have a little irritation; it acts as oil and keeps all the machinery in working order. . . .

Apparently White's irritation with his surroundings, or his desire to "eat strawberries instead of mangoes

this year," got the better of his ambition, for a letter to his mother of the 26th June 1860 shows that he had written to Sir Robert Montgomery saying he was going home on leave, "and therefore it would not be advisable to do anything for me." So ended the possibility that White might become an officer of Indian cavalry or a Conservator of the Punjab Woods and Forests.

He remained at Allahabad a few months more—how long I do not know—but the following letter to his sister shows that he was there on the 10th of August. It is the last letter he seems to have written to her before leaving India.

ALLAHABAD, *August 10th*, 1860.

Allahabad is in great beauty at present. As I daresay you know, it is situated on the banks of the Ganges and the Jumna, which meet close to the station; in consequence of the rains these rivers are both very high, in fact more like seas than rivers, and the banks are very green and covered with vegetation. I have a great habit of wandering about on horseback to all sorts of out-of-the-way places, and I constantly visit the haunts of the Hindu fakirs or priests of the sacred Gunga (or Ganges), natives with long matted hair, nearly or quite naked, with nails growing into the flesh, who live in a condition more wretched than it is possible to imagine. They are the most ill-looking set of men you see, and do not show off their countenances to the best advantage when a cursed Gora (white man) approaches their holy places, as they always meet him with a scowl and muttered incantations. . . .

CHAPTER IX.

ON LEAVE—RETURN TO INDIA.

1860–1868.

THERE is nothing to show when George White went on leave, or what he did with his holiday, or how long it lasted. According to the regimental history, the battalion in which he had been serving since 1854 remained in India until 1867, and he evidently was not with them. Apparently he joined the second battalion, then in Ireland, but the regimental history does not say so, and there are no family letters between 1860 and 1868.

In after years he often spoke of Rome and Naples, saying he knew both well; and it is possible that he visited Italy on his way home from India, as Indian officers often used to do.

The only materials I have for this period of his life are some notes about him by Sir John Dunne and Capt. Brooke, of the 92nd Highlanders.

I have already quoted White's old friend Sir John Dunne with reference to the ill-luck of the Inniskillings in not being sent to the Crimea, and the

effect which this had upon White's advancement in the army. After showing how the writer himself and one of his contemporaries, Lord Wolseley, saw Crimean service and got rapid promotion in consequence, the memorandum goes on as follows:—

No wonder that when I joined a Depot Battalion in Cork in January 1862, and found George White there in his twenty-seventh year, still a Lieutenant in the unlucky Inniskillings, that he should tell me that all military hopes had been eaten out of his heart.

The next year—1863—seeing me, six months younger than himself, a Major, caused him to roll out many expletives at his misfortunes. But all this had no effect on his cheery charm of manner, his Irish wit and love of good stories, and his genuine devotion to sport, which endeared him to us all. In those days there were four packs of Foxhounds within reach of Cork, besides a lot of first-rate Harriers. George's pocket never went to well-trained hunters. He would get on some half-broken three- or four-year-old, and with his Archer grip, his strong hands, and determined fixity of purpose, he would grind his teeth, and put the fear of the Devil into the beast as he came to a big fence, and absolutely lift him over it. Except Colonel Snipey Green, R.H.A., I have never seen any man with such will-power to make a screw jump and gallop.

I remember driving him over some fifteen miles to Rye Court one afternoon to help me to buy a mare belonging to a nephew of Captain Rye—the Master of the Muskerry Foxhounds, and one of the finest huntsmen and riders in all Ireland. Rye suggested that a stable boy should show the mare over some made fences near the house. But George, though in an ordinary morning suit, insisted on getting on her himself, and took her right away into a bit of the Muskerry country abounding in great big—rather rotten—razor-back banks that require a most perfectly trained horse

to get over in safety. To Rye's astonished admiration George sent the mare over four or five of them, and coming back whispered to me, "Buy the mare—no matter the price—for you can't throw her down." So I paid nearly double her apparent value, but was well rewarded, as the mare never made a mistake in the two years I hunted her.

At last, just about when I got command of the 99th in 1865, George got his company in the 27th, and promptly exchanged into the 92nd.[1] And in the spring of 1867 I remember lunching with him in the Ship Street Barracks in Dublin, and finding him thoroughly happy, and immensely pleased with his new corps. And well he might be, for in every respect they seemed a *corps d'élite*. Ireland was full of Fenianism, and even some regiments were tainted with it. Lord Strathnairn, who was then Colonel-in-Chief, insisted on keeping the Gordons in Dublin. They were called "The Duke of Abercorn's Guards," and were the delight of all the loyal men and women on the banks of the Liffey. How handsome George White escaped being bewitched by soft Irish eyes was a mystery. Probably he found safety in numbers.

And then the 92nd went to India, and *at last* when he was a Major of 43,[2] with some 25 years' service, came the very first time that all his latent power and energy was given an opportunity of displaying itself. And how well he seized it, and how quickly then he became a trusted leader of men, is part of the history of his country. The way he had to wait for years for his opportunity should be a lesson to all disappointed young officers of to-day.

The extraordinary amount of "go" that was in him betrayed him at times into bits of foolhardiness. But he could not help it! It was in his blood. When I asked him why, as retiring Commander-in-Chief in India, he should go "chasing" with a lot of boys in Calcutta, and badly break his

[1] He got his company in 1863.
[2] 44.

leg, his answer was, "I saw that an A.D.C. of mine was getting the better of me, and though I knew my horse was a bit done, I could not help going at the jump to try and win."

And after the over-exertion in taking long walks at Mentone (which was the ultimate cause of his death), he said to me that he felt so strong that he could not conceive how anything in the shape of a walk could affect him.

That confidence in himself and in his powers made him the true Hero that he was!

I have quoted Sir John Dunne's memorandum to the end, though it anticipates the story of George White's life, because it is written by one of White's oldest surviving friends, and gives a graphic picture of the man as he appeared to his comrades. I will now return to the period with which this chapter deals.

According to the official record White got his company on the 10th July 1863—after less than ten years' service, and when he was twenty-eight years of age. This was not rapid promotion as compared with that of some of his contemporaries, but it was not phenomenally slow, and in those "good old days" of purchase there were very many efficient officers who would have thought themselves fortunate if they could have changed places with him.

Why White exchanged into the 92nd there is nothing to show. To the end of his life he used to speak in the highest terms of the Inniskillings. But perhaps he thought the Gordons offered better prospects of promotion. Perhaps also, though he was by birth an Irishman, the Scottish blood which he had inherited from his mother and many of his fore-

bears made him less disinclined than he would otherwise have been to leave his first regiment. And, as Sir John Dunne says, the 92nd seemed a *corps d'elite*, so that any man might have been proud to belong to them. Whatever White's reasons for the exchange, he was from this time an enthusiastic 92nd man, and his fortunes were bound up with the regiment to the end of his service.

One of the retired officers of that regiment, Captain Harry Brooke, who joined it, on White's advice, as an Ensign in 1864, has lately put down his recollections of White at this time.

I was gazetted [he writes] in March 1864. From that day on to the day of his ever to be lamented death I looked upon Sir George as my hero and greatest friend. His cheery, noble, adventurous, and chivalrous character was always fully realised by me, and I would have done or *tried to do* anything he told me. His kindness to me commenced at a very early date, for he met me on the platform of the Waverley Station in the early morning of 22nd May, when as a boy of 18 I first arrived in Edinburgh, and as I had with the rest of my baggage my little Irish hunter, he used to love to tell the story of a sentry at the Castle gate who was asked by the late General D. Magill Crichton Maitland, who was then a Lieutenant in command of the Guard: "Has Mr Brooke joined yet?" "Yes, sir, a young officer has just gone by with a wee Curty."

Sir George (then Captain White) was always full of humour and fun, and one evening he and I and Captain Mackay were coming away from a big concert in Edinburgh where Madame Grisi and Mario had been singing, when on going down the stairs in a great crush of all the élite of Edinburgh, a cry was raised "Beware of pickpockets." Before I could turn round

I felt myself seized by the shoulders and heard Sir George and Mackay shout out, "Here he is; we've got him. Clear the road," and I was marched through the crowd to the astonishment and amusement of every one.

Sir George was left-handed and very powerful. I have seen him take two long Schneider rifles by the muzzles, and hold them both out at arm's length, and when we travelled together in the west of Ireland we used to have great fun "putting" the shot and lifting weights against the strong men of the Irish Constabulary. Sir George used to humbug them by first "putting" with his right arm, and then if they beat him he would take them on with his left and easily beat them all. He also was very fond of racquets, and a very good player, serving terrifically hard with his left arm.

Many a little anecdote could I tell you about my dear old friend, but I am so mixed up with them all that it seems to be almost as much a history of myself as him, which is not what you or I want.

In 1867 the 92nd was in orders for India, and soon after the beginning of 1868 White was on his way out. He sailed with his regiment in the troopship *Crocodile* as far as Alexandria, crossed the Isthmus by train, and embarked in the *Malabar* at Suez. One of his companions on board the *Crocodile*, Colonel Glen, late of the Lincolnshire Regiment, writes about this voyage: "We sat together at dinner, so saw a good deal of each other, and I induced him to write something in my Diary. Perhaps you are not aware he was very clever in writing acrostics." Enclosed in Colonel Glen's letter are a couple of pages of the Diary, and though there is nothing very remarkable about White's contribution, I think it may be as well,

once for all, to give here an example of what was always a favourite amusement with him. A thing of this kind gives some insight into a man's character and turn of mind.

29th, Wednesday (? January).

Weather beautiful, passed Cintra, a climate where God's creatures can enjoy life—where all save the spirit of man is divine—but his instincts being essentially Satanic suggested the shout of Fire, and to Fire Quarters we flew. Our state appeared with slight diversification to resemble that of the old woman who lived in the shoe. There were so many men they didn't know what to do. The Captain, grasping the fact, and being, like all navy men, a man of decision, orders that in case of Fire half the companies must jump overboard in order to let the other half put it out. Cornet Browne being warned to the above effect, with the impatience of youth said, He'd be d——d if he would, but on being seriously spoken to by the C.O. he saw the error he had been guilty of and promised amendment and implicit obedience for the future, and was allowed to resume his position at the head of the roster for this dangerous but highly honourable duty. Passengers begin to get very tired of all rational amusement, and some of them take to making double acrostics, of which the following is a specimen :—

I.

Where hast thou stray'd, thou monstrous child of one
Who basks his giant length 'neath Afric's sun?
Meet child of such a sire whose dripping face,
Reclining at his ease with giant grace
From sculptor's chisel I have loved to see
In massive marble, with his progeny.
Where hast thou stray'd? What dost thou here? or why
In falsely acted grief now droops thine eye?
Say, canst thou feel the joys, the griefs, the pains,
Thy hideous laminated hide contains?
Thy womb prolific and for warfare ripe,
Successor to thy Trojan prototype.

Where have I stray'd? to northern climes I go
And capture slaves who cannot say me "No."
Then to my sire my filial debt I pay,
For on the shore he made they're cast away.

II.

Alike I am the height of grief and joy,
I scorn all middle course, all base alloy.
Either I'm sunk in misery's abyss,
Or else I soar upon the wings of bliss.
Without my help vast armies helpless stand
Or piecemeal rot upon a foreign land.

LIGHTS.

1.

The one I leave how very dear to me,
Fair Albion, thy chalk cliffs when shall I see.

2.

Thy dull mud banks shall tire the aching eye
As up the sluggish stream we needs must ply.

3.

Go ask a Spanish Don for a menu,
My name, I think, it will reveal to you.

4.

In Erin's Isle or on the briny deep
Of poverty or opulence seat.

5.

A kindly smile upon an ugly face,
A ray of comfort in a dreary place.

6.

Slumbering softly in an azure light,
Or wildly tossed upon a winter's night.

7.

Just as I plunge, and ere I wet my pate,
I call an architect to tell my state.

8.

A swimmer bold who let no coward fear
Prevent his hieing to his Dinah dear.

9.

Oh land of fairy tales and gorgeous hue,
Land of punkahs and of endless stew.

On a separate leaf is given the "Solution."

1. Coast.	2. River.	3. Ola Podrida.
4. Cabin.	5. Oasis.	6. Deep.
7. In-i-go (*Inigo Jones*)	8. Leander.	9. East.

Arrived at Alexandria at 8 A.M. on the 8th February.

9th, Sunday.

Left the *Crocodile* this afternoon. Very sorry to leave the officers; all very good fellows.

10th, Monday.

Arrived at Suez early this morning, very tired with our long journey by rail. Embarked on board the *Malabar* about 10 A.M.

On the 16th February White writes to his sister :—

MY DEAR JANE,—I have now another chance of reporting my progress towards India, as we expect to reach Aden to-night. I last wrote from Alexandria before landing, and will take up my story from that. I had merely passed through Alexandria when coming home from India last, so it was breaking new ground to me. What struck me most was the

exceeding filth of the streets, mud a foot deep, and of the most offensive odour; in fact, in all my experience of Eastern cities I have seen none that can touch it. My next strongest impression was of the great mixture of nationalities by which it appears to be peopled — Jews, Turks, Greeks, Maltese, French, English, Americans, Bedouin Arabs, Nubians, and Abyssinians, besides a number of others. I believe Alexandria to be about the worst city in the world, as it combines the vices of Europe, Asia, and Africa. I did the sights—viz., Pompey's Pillar, a grand column, Cleopatra's Needle, a facsimile of the Egyptian obelisk in the Place de la Concorde in Paris, but without its setting. What interested me most was an encampment of Bedouin Arabs just outside the town, which I lit upon by accident. My dragoman could not understand my anxiety to see this camp and my indifference to Cleopatra's Needle. They appear to live in perfect peace and filth with their dogs (little pariahs) and pigeons. One thing that I was sorry to notice was the number of French shops and institutions there appear to be. However, some of those whom I questioned declared the English were much more liked than the French. We disembarked from the *Crocodile* on Sunday evening and crossed the Desert in three trains—about fourteen or fifteen hours. The train I was in started just as it was getting dusk, and arrived about eight in the morning, so that one had very little chance of wearying one's eyes on the desert. The officers got a supper at one of the stations. The night was cold, and there were wood fires at the stations, and the natives, wrapped in their loose-flowing robes, formed a fine effect by firelight as they mixed with and wondered at the warriors of Scotland in their national garb. On arrival at Suez we had some delay, but got on board the *Malabar* about eleven o'clock after a tiresome night. Two of our subalterns volunteered for Abyssinia,[1] as they are in need of subs to look after the Land Transport mules—Massey and Hives. They

[1] Sir Robert Napier's Expedition against King Theodore of Magdala was then in progress.

will have but a poor time of it, I think, as they must naturally be kept in rear and will come in for little but mule-driving.

The *Malabar* is on the same model as the *Crocodile*, so once on board everybody knew where to stow himself away. Where we lay off Suez was opposite to the valley down which Moses led the Israelites, and on the opposite side a few stunted trees standing out from the wilderness around point out the wells of Moses. Soon discovered that the *Malabar* was on the wrong side of the Overland route by the great falling off in the feeding. We got a glimpse of Mount Sinai coming down the Gulf of Suez. The last three days have been very hot. Although I have lived where the thermometer has been twenty degrees higher, I don't think I ever suffered more from the heat; it quite knocked me down, but I am right again to-day. I think it must have been as much the board ship life as the heat. The water taken fresh from the sea was 79°.

We have now passed through "The Gate of Tears," and are out of the Red Sea. We expect to be in Bombay on Tuesday, the 23rd. I am so sick of board ship life, I shall be glad to get on shore anywhere, even at Aden, which is only one degree removed from Hades.

White's active habits and eager temperament always made him impatient of life on board, and it must be admitted that a troopship is not, or was not fifty years ago, a luxurious means of conveyance. He had not many more days of it, for the *Malabar* duly arrived in Bombay before the end of the month, and the 92nd was soon in a part of India with which White was familiar—the Punjab. The headquarters of the regiment was Jalandar, with a detachment at Amritsar.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND TERM OF INDIAN SERVICE.

1868-1871.

GEORGE WHITE was nearly thirty-three years of age when he started on his second term of Indian service. He seems to have had no further desire for a command with Indian troops, or for staff or civil employment, but he was not by any means content with his prospects as a regimental officer. The fact is, I think, that he had been somewhat disheartened by his loss of early chances, and had lost for the time some of his military ardour. There is nothing in his letters to show that he had been anxious for service with the Abyssinian force, and in a letter written to his sister a few months after his return to India, he even contemplates the possibility of retirement.

The letter was written from Srinagar in Kashmir, where he had gone on a shooting expedition. He tells his sister that two of the field-officers of the regiment propose to remain in India two years and then go home on eighteen months' leave,

And undecided after that. If they carry out these intentions I may cut it at once, as I cannot wait so long for a majority, but when I get back I will be a better judge. . . . I think I shall never be able to put up with all the restraint of soldiering again after so free and wild a life.

This was perhaps at the bottom of his discontent—the growing attraction of Himalayan travel and sport.

I find by my journal[1] [he says] that I wrote last to my father on the 8th June. Very soon after that I discovered that the game was disappearing in a wonderful way, and I soon traced it to its being hunted by wild dogs. When these come it is time for the human hunter to pack up and be off, and as I was getting short of money and stores I marched in here, which is (as I daresay you remember from former letters, '56 and '57) the capital of Kashmir. However I am going out almost immediately again, as I find I prefer the wilds and snows to the demi-civilisation and heat here; in fact nothing would suit me better than the solitary life in the wilds if I could get rid of Shikaris and natives generally, but when they get you to themselves in the jungles they try every sort of dodge to do you, and are a constant source of irritation. . . . I wish Johnny was out here with me. I think it would set him up, as I never have been in such health and strength before.

This love for a solitary life in the Himalayas grew upon White year by year, and never left him—a rather curious fact,—for he was by no means a man unfitted for society. On the contrary, he seemed to enjoy it well enough when he was in it, especially women's society, and he was undeniably popular. But the family shyness and reserve, though they were concealed by his pleasant Irish manner and genuine

[1] The journal is not forthcoming.

kindness of heart, were constantly drawing him towards a life of sport and solitude.

His kindness of heart, by the way, did not prevent him from being very irritable at times with natives of India, whose little tricks exasperated him. In later years he got over this failing, which is generally the failing of young men not long out from England, with small knowledge of Indian habits and languages. To the man who spends his life among Indians they are not dishonest and irritating "niggers," but, as a rule, very patient and faithful servants, very brave and loyal comrades. Their ways are not our ways, but an Indian gentleman of the best type sets in some respects an example which most Englishmen would do well to follow.

On the 3rd January 1869, White writes to his sister again :—

Many happy new years to you all. We have had a fearful time of it here. It is the great day in the year with the Scotch, and we have had to keep it up for two days. First we had a very large dinner at the officers' mess on the 31st and sat at table to see the New Year in. At 12 o'clock the band and pipes marched straight into the room, followed by about 100 private soldiers, who commenced to wring the officers' hands and wish them a *hoppy* New Year. I think some of the guests were a little astonished at the familiarity of the gay Gordons. . . . Some of the old civilians who have reigned as kings in these parts and rarely been approached by an inferior unless with his hands joined in front of his face in token of submission, were seized by half-clad Highlandmen and patted on the back with the roughness which Scotch whisky and national feeling alone could produce. One little king I saw—not the least like Saul in stature—

who hesitated to take the hand extended to him, when he was thus reproved: "Will ye no gie your hond to an Argyleshire mon on New Years nicht? You're no so big a mon nather." Brooke, who is a very mad boy, got perfectly mad with excitement, tore the drumstick out of the big drummer's hand and beat it out of time in the most frightful way. Altogether it was one of the most funny scenes I have ever been witness to. Next day, the 1st, our men had big dinners which the officers of the company have always to attend, and on which occasion you cannot get off without drinking about three glasses of raw whisky,—as they take it very badly if you refuse to drink the toasts they propose. Thank goodness it is all over now for a year. . . .

Since last I wrote we have had a little rain and the weather is perfectly delightful at night, so cold that you are glad to get under three blankets, and the wind cold all day with fine clear bright sky. I am still unable to walk any distance owing to my feet, but have a capital substitute in the shape of a "rantoon,"—in which I can work myself at the rate of twelve miles an hour along the perfectly flat & beautifully metaled (are there two ls?) Indian roads. The natives don't know what to make of it, they run after me and ask if it is the same as the railway. I explain to them that it is a European demon, who only yields obedience to the Sahibs, & that if a native was to dare to ride on him he would assuredly grind him to powder in the intricacies of his wonderful machinery. "God is one, but the Sahibs are the people of invention & great daring." . . .

When the hot weather of 1869 came on White got leave and was soon in the Himalayas again, shooting with Captain Blackwood of the Artillery—"a very enthusiastic sportsman." Then White went on alone to new ground in the native state of Chamba. There he found himself in cold and snow, which he evidently enjoyed more than his native

servants did. He writes to his sister on the 15th May :—

It is great fun going down these snow slopes sitting in one's "chilunchee" (or great copper flat-bottomed basin used universally in India), you must steer with your pole & feet, but sometimes you get most awful upsets. A branch of a tree, well feathered as the deodaras are, makes a capital sleigh, but you feel as if you had been sitting on the hob if you trust a pair of trousers as mediators. Arrived at Salumdi. Col. Reid had told me shelter had been provided at Salumdi, but the shelter had no windows, & it was consequently full of blue ice & the door not to be opened from being frozen in. Had hard work to make the niggers clear this away, at last hit upon a device, having first tried taking my own turn, which did not succeed; I got lumps of ice in my hand & when any man stopped working I put a lump down his back. This cold application to the spinal vertebræ proved a capital tonic & reinvigorator. By dark I had the door open, & one room, if you can dignify the accommodation by such a term, nearly clear of ice. I made my servants spread my tents on the ice floor, or rather where the ice had been; they could not speak without their voices shaking from the cold. The coolies huddled together somehow & must have had a poor night of it. I had nothing to complain of, having all my clothes on, a military great-coat included, two pairs of woollen socks, and rolled up in all my bedding, & still I was cold, & never let my nose outside the blankets the whole night. Early next morning I thought I descried the first dawn through the space between one of the boards that served as roof and the rock, and shouted to "get up." My bearer after a while in a quivering voice answered "These people say it is yet night & that they cannot proceed at this time." I knew that this was merely that they were torpid, so knocked them about a little and got them off as they would stay all day long without making an effort, tho' they knew well that we ought to be over the pass before

the snow commenced to melt. Crossing the pass was the most painful thing I think I ever felt, the cold did go thro' one altho' we were making a very steep ascent which under other circumstances would have kept you warm. Some found a difficulty in breathing from which I am wonderfully free. The very surface of the snow was whirled about by the wind & cut our faces. However, we got to the top, and I must say I enjoyed the sunrise, not because one ought to admire the sunrise at 15,000 ft., but because it brought heat. My servants looked at me as if I was a fool and a demon; two of them had never seen snow before, & it was a rough introduction. We left Jullundur on the 14th, with the thermometer 90° in the shade we crossed the Sach Pass on the 28th, rather a difference. . . .

I have spoken about a twig bridge, they deserve some description. From one bank of the Chandra Bhaga (Chenab) to the other the only means of communication is by means of twig bridges, often more than 100 ft. above the torrent; the bridge is not more than about 3 or 4 inches wide, of twigs with two other twig ropes about the same thickness to rest your hands on as you pick your way along it, that is, provided you have not got something in your hand to carry. Some of the coolies will not take their loads across them, but get others with better heads to go twice. The rush of the water below if you look down combined with the shaking of the bridge makes it nervous work for a man with a bad head. Many of these bridges are 100 yards long. I can now quite realise the truth of an answer I got from a man I met at Dalhousie when I asked him what sort of a place Pangee was, "No country for a drunken man." . . .

My life up to the time I left Pangee was a repetition of what I have so fully described. I shot some more ibex and did what I consider a very odd thing, I shot two bears dead with one bullet, the bullet going clean through both. I came back the same road as I went, but the Sach Pass was a very different thing in June from what it had been in

April; it was quite pleasant coming back & I had no sort of difficulty. Where I had laboured on, cutting steps in the snow on my way into Pangee, was a beautifully grassy hill covered with brilliant-coloured wild-flowers on my return. It was heartrending work turning one's back on the snows, knowing the climate that had to be endured for the rest of the summer. As I gave Pangee a last long look & turned to descend I felt like a fallen angel turned out of heaven & about to fall into the other place. I have had one great misfortune owing to the constant snow & rain that I had on my shooting ground, I could not dry my ibex heads properly, & they are all going bad, & I am afraid I shall have no trophies of my sport to show. The heat marching in the low hills is very great, I always get up in the middle of the night & go as hard as I can; but my baggage, which takes all day, lets my servants & coolies in for great heat. I had two coolies knocked over by sunstroke the day before yesterday: one went roaring mad.

. . . . . .

If you would judge of what we endure, heat water up to 100°, and it will give you some idea of what we suffer for our country. I felt the change very much, but it has not knocked me up as yet. Not so my bearer, the only native servant I have with me here, he is utterly useless and pours perspiration all day long & can do nothing. When I ask him what is the cause he says, "One week ago snow fell on us." When I first arrived in the regular heat of the plains I started to travel by "dak" to Umritzur; on my way here my carriage broke down, & I found it so hot that I got out to try and get a breath of air; I had no shoes on, & altho' the sun had set two hours I had to get into the "gharri" again as I could not bear the heat of the road on my feet through my socks, it regularly burnt my feet.

. . . . . .

I find on my return that I have been most fortunate of the sportsmen, altho' four others were out at the same time as I

was, I killed double the number of ibex they did all put together.

The regiment is very unhealthy, three whole Companies being away, besides a lot of invalids, & still there are 99 men sick. I don't know why we should be so unhealthy; I think drink must have something to say to it. Don't make any complaints to me about cold rooms until after October next, as it has a tendency to make one irritable under present circumstances. . . .

You will, I fear, have some trouble in following this letter from sheet to sheet; the two first are pink, the third blue, the fourth yellow. I am aware this information would have been more useful at the beginning of the letter than here, but one's head cannot be expected to be clear with the thermometer at 98°.

The letter was in fact difficult to follow, the writing being very small, and crossed, on thin semi-transparent "overland" paper. The postage for a letter to England *viâ* Marseilles was then, according to White's statement, one shilling and a penny, and the weight allowed was very small, so that thin paper and crossed writing were the usual thing. But they are trying to the eyes and patience, even when the hand is clear and good, as White's had now become. In later years, and under less difficult conditions, it developed into a remarkably fine open script.

The welcome monsoon found White at Jalandar, whence he writes to his sister on the 28th July:—

We have had magnificent rain for the last fortnight, and every body & thing is picking up in consequence. I ought to except our habitations, which are certainly not picking up, but showing on the contrary decided symptoms of falling

down, nearly all being built of mud, 24 hours' Indian rain exposes their weak points. I don't think a single circumstance has come to my knowledge since last I wrote that would interest you, the one of most interest to me is that the Mangoes are over, but it is a melancholy interest. . . .

But the break in the heat of Jalandar seems to have been short, for White's next letter to his sister is strong on the subject. He reproaches her for not writing, and goes on :—

August 18th, 69.

Wish you had a touch of Jullundur in July & August to let you know when there is excuse for being lazy. . . .

Where the soles of your boots blister, & your candles melt in daylight with fervent heat, where the great luminary comes so tarnation close that a tall man can't go out in daytime without a wet sponge on his head for fear of having his hair singed, & the soldiers with red hair are confined to barracks till sunset, where the hens that lay in the evening always lay hard-boiled eggs. . . .

And he signs himself "your parboiled and calcined brother."

He spent the latter part of the summer on detachment at Amritsar, with nothing to write about more interesting than sickness and mosquitoes; and then the early "cold weather" of the Punjab came to bring relief. It was a cold weather marked by the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to India, and in January 1870 White quotes a story which was current at the time. The Viceroy was then Lord Mayo, probably one of the most successful and popular Viceroys who ever came to India, for he combined a high sense of

the importance and dignity of his office with the easiest and most cordial manners. Whether the story is true I cannot say, but the members of the Royal family who have visited India have always shown a scrupulous regard for the position of the Sovereign's representative, and it is probable that something of the kind may have occurred.

To Miss Jane White.

Jany. 11*th*, 70.

The Governor-General has been most particular about being the first on all occasions. The wife of the Lieut.-Govr. of Bengal issued invitations to a ball to meet His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. The Governor-General had them all called in & altered to meet His Excellency the Viceroy & H.R.H., etc. The natives cannot understand the Queen's son playing second fiddle to anybody in India. Lord Mayo has turned out a regular Tartar in points of Etiquette, having got his schooling from the Duke of Abercorn's reign in Ireland. However, it is of great importance out here, as it is to little points of Etiquette that the rajas & big people of India look. . . .

White's comments upon the story are correct enough. All Orientals watch with the greatest care and interest these questions of ceremonial etiquette, and no doubt the attitude of the Royal Princes and Princesses with regard to the Viceroy have been an example of great value. Whether the Chiefs and people of India have entirely understood and acquiesced in the principle which underlies that attitude is another question. Their respect for royal birth is so great that it may be doubted whether they would

admit that the King's son should, under any circumstances, yield precedence to the King's servant. But there can be no doubt that the result has been to give them a very high idea both of the Viceroy's position and of the earnest desire of the Royal family to do what is right.

White's next letter touches upon another characteristic of the Royal family. He writes on the 15th February:—

The Duke of Edinburgh passed through here last Wednesday. All officers in the Station had to go to meet him at the Railway Station. I was surprised at his recognising me after so long a time.

Lord Napier of Magdala was now Commander-in-Chief in India, and White writes about him:—

To Miss Jane White.

April 21*st*, 70.

The principal event here has been a flying visit paid by Lord Napier of Magdala. As my detatchment was the nearest to Dalhousie we saw the most of him. He was very flattering in what he said about us. I dined with him one night & made him lunch with us one day. He seems a very nice old man. He is a great contrast to the man who has just given up Command in Chief in India, Sir William Mansfield, a man who was rather oppressively a man of weight, who never spoke without appearing to have weighed every sentence; still Lord Napier is a man that would make people serve with him much more readily than the other. . . .

The comparison was probably just enough, but, as White afterwards found, Lord Napier was much more

than a very nice old man. His extreme courtesy and simplicity of manner perhaps tended at first sight to make men underestimate his many fine qualities. In later life White had the greatest admiration for him, and rightly, for Napier had *le feu sacré*, there was no truer soldier alive. He had shown in the Mutiny a fiery courage and dash which had singled him out at a time when the behaviour of our officers had been perhaps exceptionally striking; and his conduct of the difficult expedition to Abyssinia had proved him to be a commander of equal resolution and ability. The Bengal Engineers of his day were a distinguished corps, and he did them honour.

1870 was the year of the Franco-Prussian War, and White, in common with most soldiers, followed the course of the conflict with interest. He thought that our state of preparation was not what it should have been, in case we should be drawn into the stream; and he writes towards the end of the summer, from the new "hill station" of Dalhousie, where some of the 92nd were at work road-making:—

> We have heard of the Prussians being close to Paris. By the time this reaches you I wonder what will have taken place. All our big men in England are shooting grouse, I suppose, or rather were, so I conclude there won't be much action on England's part.

White's mother had died not long before, and some of his pleasure in the prospect of seeing home again had been taken away; but as the cold weather of 1870-71 came in, and his chance of a majority seemed as

distant as ever, he began to turn his eyes to Whitehall. By the beginning of March 1871 he had made up his mind to take leave. Meanwhile he was amusing himself with shooting snipe. He must have been a good shot. He writes on the 2nd March :—

I returned last week from a 14 days shooting excursion. It rained nearly the whole time, but we (3) had good tents, and did not mind it much. We managed to get 670 snipes, out of which about half fell to my gun. I was wet from morning to night, but did not feel any bad effect. To-morrow I hope to give up soldiering for 16 months, and hope to be at home in May.

On the 15th he writes from Delhi :—

Arrived here on the morning of the 13th March by rail. What a difference from my first entry into the City of the Emperors in 1855, when we dragged our way through it in a bullock-cart at the rate of two miles an hour, with the remains of the *Charlotte* detachment of the 27th! I passed through it again in '59 on my way to take up my appointment as D.A.Q.M.G. at Allahabad, but never had an opportunity before of seeing its sights. First amongst these comes the Kotab, an isolated pillar, but though alone now a very king of pillars; inscriptions taken from the Koran run up its height, and altho' its foundations are of Hindu origin the superstructure is Mussulman. It is at a distance of about 11 miles from Delhie, and from its top you get a magnificent view of the country intervening between its site, which was formerly Delhie, and the present city. The plain all round is covered with gigantic ruins of the tombs of kings and their favourites, and reminded me forcibly of the traces of departed greatness round Rome. Round the base of the Kotab are the remains of Hindu architecture, very beautiful pillars which supported the Bhoot Khana or Idol House, carved with all

the fantastic and extravagant devices of Hindu mythology, the figures one and all more or less mutilated by the iconoclastic tendencies of the Mussulman conquerors. A Hindu chuprassie showed us over it. I tried to improve the occasion by remarking on the difference in the raj of the English and of the Mussulmans, the former preserving and even restoring the specimens of Hindu architecture even when idolatrous, their anxiety to preserve being rather painfully evinced by the disfiguring remains of cement casts lately taken by Govt. order of the inscriptions, &c. for the benefit of the decipherers at home. The chuprassie answered me well. "Sirkar aise *Kam* ke upar bahut parwarish karte hain." The Govt. show a tender regard for *work* such as this. He did not believe in the Govt. having any tender respect for the feeling of Hindus. Every showman about here points out Humayons' tomb, and perhaps from the greater number of military ears into which he has to pour his description, first dwells upon the fact of it having been the spot where Hodson secured the King of Delhie in '57. On the following day, the 14th, I spent the morning investigating the part of the City which we attacked in '57, and in visiting the tomb of Nicholson and the monument raised to the memory of the officers who fell before the City. In the evening I visited the Fort, formerly the palace of the kings of Delhie, now the Barracks of a wing of the 109th Regt., also the Jumma musjid, the largest mosque in the world, I believe; the Minars giving fine points from which to get a bird's-eye view of the modern City of Delhie and its environs. In a museum in the gardens here they show the Cross which (as at St Paul's) topped the church in '57. It is full of bullet-holes which the Sepahis used to amuse themselves firing at the emblem of Christianity. I was struck greatly by the little damage which had been done to the Jumma musjid, and I asked the high priest how it had got off so. Well, he answered, that it had been greatly saved. Some of the scenes are rather apt to make you slay the first native you see, such as the tree where the few

Europeans inside the walls when the mutiny took place were tied up and shot at, the princes of Delhie looking on at the tamáshá.

To-night I leave Delhie for Agra, where the sight of sights in Hindustan, perhaps in the world, is to be seen—viz., the Taj. . . .

I have engaged my passage in an Italian steamer which leaves Bombay on the 1st April. I go through the Suez Canal, and disembark at Naples. . . . Mr Brooke and two other brother officers are going home in the same steamer with me.

I have just read Mr Cardwell's scheme for doing away with purchase in the army. It reads fair, but I doubt the possibility of "Selection" ever being conducted fairly. Men who are what we used to call at school "Sucks" are sure to get on at the expense of better men who won't stoop or take the trouble to get on by such means. . . .

So, with anticipations of a pleasant voyage and home-coming, George White left India again for a full year's stay in the old country.

He was now nearly thirty-six years of age, with eighteen years of service behind him, and still a captain, who had never seen a shot fired in action. His prospects did not then seem very bright, and, largely no doubt because he had seen only the routine side of soldiering, there is nothing in his letters to show any great enthusiasm for his profession. He had done his work steadily, and was regarded as a good regimental officer, but that is all that can be said. The fire had not yet been quickened in his heart by active service.

CHAPTER XI.

PROMOTION—AND MARRIAGE.

1871-1874.

I CANNOT say how White spent his year of leave, but no doubt a large part of it was passed with his people in Ireland. His father was now an old man, and had not long to live, so that there was the more reason for the son to be at Whitehall.

It did not bring him his coveted majority, and in the autumn of 1872 he sailed again, still a captain, for another spell of Indian service. He writes on the 14th November to his sister from the little hill-station of Chakrata :—

I arrived here this day week (Thursday) after a very rapid journey from Bombay. I arrived in Bombay on Thursday the 31st October, and started again for the North-West on Saturday morning at 10 o'clock. The railway carried me as far as Saharunpore, which place I reached at 12 o'clock midnight, Monday night or Tuesday morning, after a continued railway journey of 63 hours, which I did not feel very much, but which must have taken a great deal out of me as my mirror told me of a very ghost-like face next morning. On Tuesday morning I again started posting, and had a most

miserable journey to a place called Deyrah, a distance of only 42 miles, but the journey occupied 13½ hours; my carriage was drawn by coolies for 8 miles through a pass over some low hills, and the time occupied was 6 hours. This part of the journey was through very fine scenery, and very luxuriant vegetation, but the night came on very soon after I had entered the pass, and even that consolation was denied to me; however I arrived at last at Deyrah, which is at the foot of the Himalayas, and after nearly breaking in all the doors of what calls itself an hotel, I at last managed to get a bedstead and went to sleep. Next day I was off again, carried in a palanquin, and made Chukrata on Thursday morning, to the great astonishment of my brother officers, who had not expected to see me for another week.

I had a very flattering reception from my men, & a very kindly one from all. The cold here is very great, and I had to walk through a hail shower. On my arrival, the very great change made me feel rather wretched at first, but I am now getting accustomed to the Cold & hope it may do me good. The remarks on my personal appearance were by no means flattering: "Coptan you're awfoo seedy looking" was my greeting from one old friend. Chukrata is a pretty station, but wants wood; on one side we have a magnificent view of the snows, extending, I hear, the length of England. The houses are good for India, but it is very cold in the house, even in the daytime, and the chimneys are so badly made that nearly all the grates smoke; however, so far the cold has been a fine dry cold, & it does not make one so rheumatic as the damp of England. When the snow begins to fall I believe this place is trying to people not made to endure Arctic climes. . . .

The first few days in a "hill-station," the sudden change from the heat of the plains to the still dry cold of the Himalayas, are generally trying; but these stations are a godsend to the British soldier.

He does not know it, and dislikes them heartily, preferring the plains with all their heat to the isolation of a bare hill-top, where there is little amusement to be got except catching the gorgeous Indian butterflies.

Soon after his arrival White was sent to another hill-station, Masuri, on Court-martial duty. From there he writes on the 17th December :—

To Miss Jane White.

I dare say you may have heard this station mentioned, it is one of the biggest hill-stations in India, but is nearly deserted at this season of the year; however there is a fair hotel at which I am staying, & between long rambles in the adjacent hills and the hospitality of one pleasant house, I have enjoyed the change from Chukrata. To-day is very miserable, as the winter rains have set in down below, & we are in thick clouds & sleet up here. I only hope it will clear up again before I get orders to rejoin, as the rain here is probably snow at Chukrata, & it will not be pleasant marching over the hills in such weather. . . .

I fear this will be a most uninteresting letter, but I have not any materials for a better one, & may perhaps make it more acceptable by reporting myself very fit indeed & very much in my old Himalayan form. . . .

The winter of 1872-73 White seems to have spent at Chakrata, in cold and snow, for he writes on the 6th March :—

To Miss Jane White.

CHUKRATA, *6th March* 73.

I wonder you had not found out before that Ireland is much warmer in winter than England. Our weather here,

which had become springlike with Violets out, has gone back again and we are once more in snow. Yesterday morning the effect was quite curious, the trees in my garden are covered with scarlet rhododendron blossoms, and as the branches were thickly coated in snow the scarlet of the flower looked doubly bright against the white. The Natives here make jam of the flower, and it really is not bad. . . .

The rhododendron flower, by the way, is hardly "scarlet," at least I have never seen it of that colour. In the Eastern Himalayas, where there is much moisture, one may see a variety of shades, from white to the darkest mauve; but in the comparatively dry climate of the western part of the range crimson is, I believe, the only natural colour. The rhododendron there is a tall tree, and in the spring nothing can be more beautiful than the masses of crimson blossom overhead standing out against a deep blue sky, with the white peaks of the snowy range in the northern background. Here and there the steep side of a valley many hundreds of feet in depth will be clothed with rhododendron, and the whole forest seems aglow.

White's letter closes with a dissertation on his "usual luck." He had been hoping that the immediate retirement of the Colonel commanding the battalion would give him his majority; but the Colonel changed his mind, and White was disappointed.

In May 1873 he was trying yet another hill-station, Simla, the largest and best known of all, for Simla is the summer headquarters of the Indian Government.

From there he writes on the 22nd May :—

I have been enjoying myself here very much. We have had a great deal of rain, which has kept the weather cool and pleasant, and what with an occasional dance and receptions at Government House, &c., I find plenty of amusement.

Whether his enjoyment had anything to do with an important change of life which was coming upon him I do not know, but it seems not impossible. Hitherto White had seemed to care more for shooting in the snowy ravines of Kashmir than for dances and receptions at Simla.

At the end of this year the 92nd Highlanders were transferred to Multan, one of the hottest and least favoured stations in India. It is situated in the south of the Punjab, and surrounded by some very arid tracts of country, so that it is sun-beaten and dusty to a degree which people who have never been out of England would find hard to imagine. During the summer the thermometer in the shade often rises above 110 degrees, and the roads in the station are, or used to be, strewn with a thick layer of reedy grass to keep down in some measure the stifling clouds of dust. A residence in Multan, therefore, was not a pleasant prospect, and White did not look forward to it with any satisfaction. But during the long winter march to his new quarters he was far from troubled by heat, and the close of the march brought him a joyful surprise in the announcement of his long deferred promotion to the rank of major. He writes to his brother John on the 15th January 1874 :—

So many thanks for your sequence of telegrams, both of which gave me unbounded satisfaction, but especially the last; the step was a long time coming, but I don't know that the wait has taken away from the pleasure of it now that it has come. It will be some time before I can quite realise it, as I work on as a captain until such time as the official intimation has worked through Horse Guards to Commander-in-Chief's office in India, and thence through Lahore (the division headquarters) to Mooltan. I got your telegram (2nd) about three marches from this, and as I had gone on in front of the regiment on duty I was enabled to meet the new Colonel with the news on his entry into camp.

We marched on here on the 13th and find it better than we expected. We are obliged to remain in camp until the end of the month as the regiment we relieve (41st) cannot get under weigh for Aden until the 30th; & they occupy the barracks. The cold is excessive; I have never known such a winter in all my long experience of the Punjab. The last two or three marches I could have cried from the agony of the cold, turning out at 4 A.M., all the water being frozen in our tents.

I have taken a very good house with my friend Sam Roe, who is surgeon-major of the regiment, & now purpose making the best of my present quarters for a year or so, unless something very unforeseen takes place. I get 6 months' leave during this coming summer. I have not quite made up my mind (if a White ever does make it up) as to how I shall spend it. Three courses open—England, Simla, or some other lounge, Cashmere and hard work shooting. England has this drawback, that I can only go home on English pay, about £20 a month. If I stay in the East I can command a better climate, more healthy life, and £80 a month pay; however I don't think it will end in my going home. . . .

The days of strong drink in the army were not yet wholly at an end, and White records in his next

letter, of the 12th February 1874, that "the 92nd and 41st had one very heavy night together. I never saw so many corses in so short a time." It is forty years since then, and White was in after life so abstemious a man, one of the strongest advocates of temperance in the army, that there is perhaps no harm in saying that according to this letter he was himself so far affected by the jollity of the evening as to lose his way going home and find himself in the wrong camp.

White had now for some time been the master of Whitehall, and of the small estate attached to it, his father and elder brother having both died. Apparently he found some difficulty in managing his property through agents, even with the help of his younger brother, for he was not very careful or exact about money matters; but it brought him a considerable addition to his major's pay—something like £1600 a year—and made him independent of his profession. It also put him into a position to marry if so disposed.

White was reserved, and before this time there is nothing in his letters to show that he had thought of such a step. But when his leave became due he went to Simla, not to England or Kashmir, and before the Simla season was half over he was engaged to the only daughter of Archdeacon Baly, of Calcutta. The Archdeacon was at that time one of the best-known men in India—and one of the most popular—a man of high character and attainments, who united a refreshing plainness of speech with an

LADY WHITE.

equally refreshing geniality and kindness of heart. His daughter was a bright-natured, auburn-haired girl, "religiously brought up," as George White told his sister, with evident satisfaction, but accomplished, and thoroughly at home in society, and, what no doubt strongly appealed to him, an exceptionally daring horsewoman. His letters at this time are very happy and pleasant to read. He was thirty-nine years of age, and had for some time regarded himself as a confirmed bachelor, but his outlook on life was now completely altered. As he put it himself:—

I thought for a long time that a girl's society would bore me for a continuance, but I have lived to know better, and I do really think we have every prospect of being ourselves thoroughly happy, and of making those around us so also.

From Multan, where on the expiration of his leave he had to rejoin for a few days to satisfy the Pay Department, he writes to his brother on the 15th October giving various commissions, and finishes up, "Good-bye, old boy, and don't damn me too much." A few days later he is back in Simla, whence he writes on the 29th:—

The day after to-morrow I am to be done for with all the honours of war, got up in full uniform, before the C.-in-C. and all his myrmidons. I wish to God it was all over, but I feel at the same time as jolly as a sandboy, whatever that is. Amy also is as gay as a lark. . . . I am going to wire to you as soon as I have written this, so that you may crack a magnum for luck on Saturday afternoon.

The wedding was duly solemnised—George White "in full Highland get-up and manfully supported by Harry Brooke" of his regiment, after which the newly-married pair went off to Mushobra, a pretty place in the mountains a few miles from Simla, to spend their honeymoon. From there he writes a fortnight later:—

We live out of doors very much. My wife has got a pony like a cat that will carry her over all sorts of awkward-looking places. She shuts her eyes and puts her trust in Providence, who has stuck to her so far. I never felt a bit help one on so; it sucks all the fatigue out of you.

Then they returned to Simla for a few days, and by the end of November were on their way to their first home in Multan—paying some visits on the way.

Before the end of the year they were in their own house, whence White writes to his brother:—

Amy and I arrived here from Lahore on Monday morning, and I have been very hard at work ever since getting things a little ship-shape in the house. I am very hard up for rooms, but must shove along somehow; the worst of it is that one of my few rooms has to be given up to my wife's maid, a Europe lady of fine manners whose liver won't admit of her drinking anything but claret.

We have a great regimental ball coming off to-night, and we have managed to squeeze a young lady into the house.

And so on about boxes from England and linen and plate and other such matters. And the young wife adds a postscript:—

MY DEAR J. W.,—

Oh dear! I wish I knew you, and could tell what name I could call you. The above initials do strike me as queer, and I daresay if I knew you nothing would seem more natural than to call you by them. We are in the midst of unpacking, and I do think an array of boxes is worse than an enemy. When we get a little settled I mean to write you a long letter and tell you what we have been doing. George's letters are short and business-like; mine are long and ungrammatical. I am so busy and in such a bustle I cannot write sense now.—With love, your affectionate sister,

AMY WHITE.

Perhaps I have dwelt too long on the details of George White's marriage, but I am writing the story of his life, not a military history; and there is no single event in a man's life which, for good or evil, is of so much moment to him.

CHAPTER XII.

MULTAN—SIMLA—SITAPUR.

1875–1878.

WHITE now settled down to his life as a married man, and to his new duties as a field-officer in his regiment.

Sir James Lyall, afterwards Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab, writes of him, with reference to this period of his life:—

> I first knew White well in the 92nd at Multan. He married and brought his wife there within a month; and I had been married very little longer, and went there as Settlement Commissioner. This fact made us and our wives intimate for the time. Though he was an Irishman and the rest of the 92nd were all Scots,[1] White . . . was very popular, and took the lead in everything.

Among the amusements of the place were paper-chasing and hunting, in both of which White and his young wife were prominent. Within a month of his arrival, he describes in a letter to his sister how his

[1] Brooke, his "best man," was an Irishman too, but they were, I believe, the only Irishmen in the regiment.

wife's horse, which had never been jumped before, comes down at "a stiff bit of timber, very high. . . . I thought I was a widower, but she was not hurt. She wanted to go at it again, but I was dead against it." Well he might be, for "the horse was winded, and did not get up for some time." Mrs White had gone with the "hares," out of his sight. He came up just in time to see her get her fall.

Then he gets a heavy fall himself, and his wife tells the story in a letter to John White :—

MOOLTAN, *Feby.* 3*rd*, 75.

I have never answered the very kind letter you wrote me shortly after my marriage, & I think perhaps you may care to hear from me again, though there is not much to tell; existence is very prosy in a place like Mooltan. I have often read your letter to me since. It gave me no end of pleasure hearing from you that you are ready to like me! I hope I shall not make it very difficult for you to do so. . . . I do think being married does make you much more sedate. I suppose it is the fact of your being a much more responsible creature that awes you, and the sense of your own dignity rather overwhelms you at first. I am writing rather nonsense to you who do not know me, but if you only saw the day, you would not wonder at my ideas being rather hazy. The atmosphere is so thick with dust one might almost cut it with a knife. Keep your doors well shut as you may, the dust seems to penetrate inside, and there is a thick coating on everything you touch, which is rather harrowing to my feelings just now, when I have everything new about me. . . .

If this dust-storm clears off, we were going for a mild hunt after a bagged jackal. The General here is a very sporting man, & has a number of spaniels, which are the backbone of the Mooltan pack. Any other dog may become a member, provided he can run, no matter what his breed. So you may

imagine a hunt with the Mooltan Pack is a picture worthy for 'Punch.' If proceedings are slow, and no run, the dogs amuse themselves, those that can, by begging. George had a very nasty fall a day or so ago out at one of these hunts. His horse put his foot into a rat-hole, came down, rolled over George, finally getting up & galloping off. George meanwhile got up, was driven home by some ladies to tell me he was not hurt, in case Mr Nutmeg should come home riderless, and then mounted another horse to go in search of the missing one. He has been in a helplessly stiff condition ever since, and very sorry for himself. He is now engrossed in a book on War tactics, learning how to take a very hard position which an enemy are to hold against him on Friday. He declares he is going to be beaten. I dare not speak to him, he is so deep in his book, & if I venture on a remark I get most thoroughly snubbed. However, he has just had the poor grace to declare that *on a day like this* it is better fun being a married man than a bachelor.

White's strategical studies were evidently of good service to him, for on the 18th February he writes to his brother—

No news to tell you. I had command of an army here a few days ago, & gave my adversary a very decided licking. I have just been out now in a very hot sun to consult about another battle which we are to fight to-morrow, but in which I am only second in command. Amy goes out on horseback & gets very excited, & makes a capital spy. . . .

There is nothing to show how the second battle ended, or how the short remainder of the cold weather was passed; but before the heat set in White had taken leave again, and had gone up with his wife to spend some months in Simla. From there he writes to his brother on the 31st May:—

We are in full swing of Simla life, nothing but dinners, balls, and Badminton parties. . . . Last Friday there was a grand ball at Govt. House in honour of Queen's birthday. Amy and I dined with two of the A.D.C.'s, and went on with them. As it was the first *grand* ball of the season, all the ladies had their best frocks on, and it was worth seeing in consequence. I don't often get to rackets now, as I have so many other engagements, but we occasionally get up a good game. We are to have a show game for the ladies some day this week. Have you ever played lawn tennis? Not a bad game by any means, far better than Badminton. . . . My chances of getting home next year are looking more cloudy. Parker[1] talks of going, and as he has been out here ever since the regiment landed, he can get leave if he likes. . . . I was advised to go in for an Adjutant-Generalship vacant now, but it would keep me so long in India and in the plains in the hot weather that I have not gone in for it, although it would give me some £500 a year extra.

It was during this Simla season of 1875 that I first made White's acquaintance. I had also lately married, and had come up to Simla as an Attaché in the Foreign Office. White was then a man of forty, and I was fifteen years younger, so that I did not get to know him well. He was growing bald, and I regarded him with reverence, or irreverence, as a man of advanced age. But we used to meet occasionally at Badminton or the new game of lawn tennis, then, if I remember right, played with lop-sided racquets, to get more "screw," and with a net six inches lower in the middle than at the sides, and a court broader at the ends than the middle. In spite of his age, White was active and keen about all games; and both he

[1] Colonel Parker was senior major of the 92nd.

and his wife were very popular in society. Lord Northbrook was then Viceroy, and the present Lord Cromer was his private secretary. White was a frequent guest at Government House, and seemed a favourite with all the Viceregal party. With us younger men, whom he did not know well, his manner was rather grave and reserved, but courteous, and at times bright and winning,—the manner of a man who is shy and yet self-possessed.

Tall and spare, almost gaunt, with strongly-cut features, he was in his Highland uniform a striking figure.

The amusements of a Simla season did not wholly engross White's attention, and I see from one of his letters that he was thinking about a matter in which a British regimental officer would hardly have been expected to take much interest. A great native chief, the Gaekwar of Baroda, had been accused of an attempt to poison the British representative at his court; and Lord Northbrook, with the best intentions, had associated some Indian notables with the tribunal which was to inquire into the case. Though the evidence was clear, they would not, perhaps could not, go against their order, and the result of the investigation was a divided verdict. In the end the Indian Government had to disregard the verdict, and to depose the Gaekwar as an act of State. Upon this subject White writes to a friend, Lady Abercromby :—

I fancy His Ex. must have had a very anxious time of it over the Baroda business, and I don't think he has shown his usual good sense about it. However, it is easy to be wise

after the event, and I cannot help admiring the way in which the Govt. have done right (in removing the Gaekwar), altho' they are obliged to stultify their own deeds in doing so. Their policy appears to me to be grand in its scorn for consequences.

It was characteristic of Lord Northbrook, who was full of consideration for Indian feeling, and yet conspicuously upright, both to have made the initial mistake and to have firmly repaired it. It was not less characteristic of George White to have taken an interest in the question, and to have fairly judged both mistake and reparation. In later years, when I got to know him better, I was often struck by the fact that his interest was not confined to matters concerning his profession, and that in dealing with non-military questions he brought to bear upon them what is in public affairs far more valuable than mere intellectual ability—an independent mind and that rarest of qualities, "common-sense."

After two or three months in the cool air and pleasant life of "the hills" White returned to duty at Multan; and his two senior officers having taken leave, he found himself in command of the regiment. He writes to his sister on the 29th August:—

I have been leading a very regular life down here, the Command of the Regiment gives me enough to do without being the least irksome. The regt. is very healthy, only 30 men in hospital to-day, and I find the heat agrees with me perfectly. Amy's letters are full of accounts of gaieties at Simla, fancy balls, theatricals, concerts, etc., in all of which she takes part. There are very few nice people here now,

nearly everybody is in the hills. I lead a very solitary life. The weather is so hot that one has to be in one's house by about 9, & not out again before 6 in the evening; however the days go by quick enough. The only sport that Mooltan can boast of is now at its height—Quail shooting. They really swarm about, & a party of two or three can in two hours' shooting get 50 couples. The natives have call-birds trained, & put them down in the fields intended to be shot over. Every wild Quail in the neighbourhood comes to the call-birds, & in this way you collect a grand morning's sport into a few fields.

White informs his brother a few days later that he has "improved greatly in shooting, we have had such constant practice at trap shooting here, both quail and parrots." The little "green parrot" of India flies very fast, and it was often used for trap shooting instead of the pigeon. It is such a friendly and engaging little bird when tame, and so beautiful in freedom, glittering like a winged jewel as it wheels through the blue air, that using it for trap shooting goes against the grain. But if man must have trap shooting, parrokeets are perhaps no better entitled to mercy than other birds, and they are said to do some damage to the crops.

At the end of the Simla season Mrs White rejoined her husband, looking decidedly the better for the mountain air; but White himself had begun to suffer from the prevailing curse of Multan, "a vicious kind of boil," which tormented him considerably in after years. Nevertheless he was enjoying himself fairly well, and taking the best means to ward off Indian ailments—plenty of exercise. "We are keeping the

pot aboiling at Mooltan," he writes on the 29th December, "this is the height of our good, as your bad, season. Cricket, dances, riding parties, &c. I am very well off for horses just at present, having three very fine saddle-horses." He was always well mounted.

The cold weather of 1875-76 was made memorable by the visit to India of the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward the Seventh, and White had the honour of meeting the Prince at Lahore. About the same time the newspapers announced the resignation of the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, whom, in spite of the unlucky Baroda business, White regarded as "a right good Governor-General." He was too shy and reserved a man to be generally popular, and he had been at a disadvantage in following a Viceroy so beloved as Lord Mayo; but most of those who had an opportunity of knowing him and his work would have agreed in White's opinion. A more conscientious man than Lord Northbrook never came to India, and he was withal cool and clear-headed to an unusual degree.

In the spring of 1876 the 92nd received orders for a move to Sitapur and Benares, a wing at each place, and White was pleased at the prospect. He knew Sitapur and liked it, for there was "grand shooting all round," and the climate was better than at Multan. But the move was not to take place until autumn, and White had to face the hot season in his old quarters, where the thermometer soon rose to over 100° in the shade. This was trying work for the

young wife, who had decided to stay with him, and even for the men of the regiment, though the dryness of the heat kept them from suffering. "The Gay Gordons," White wrote to his brother, "are in great health but decidedly thirsty." Small blame to them.

White and his wife tried to forget the heat in reading. His brother had sent them 'Daniel Deronda' and Trevelyan's 'Life of Macaulay,' and White writes :—

I am reading Froude's 'English in Ireland' leisurely, he certainly does not love our countrymen, but I believe his estimate is nearer the truth than most other accounts. . . .

White's letter, dated the 24th May, goes on to tell of the Birthday parade :—

We were out on parade a little after five this morning, and fired a *feu de joie* in honour of Her Majesty and marched past. Amy turned out and rode an Arab belonging to General Macpherson, who now commands the Mooltan Brigade, and who has lately come here.

Perhaps some who have never been in India may be interested in White's account of the way in which English men and women had to live in a Multan summer :—

The weather has been wonderfully cool so far for the time of year, however it is warmish to-day. It is now noon and the thermometer in my verandah is 101°, about 4 P.M. it will go up to about 108°. I have gone to great trouble to keep the inside of the house cool, and I have succeeded wonderfully so far, the thermometer now in drawing-room 77°, but you might easily fancy yourself in a steamer, as I have two

enormous thermantidotes pumping air through wet grass-screens into the room, the noise of the wheels is exactly the sound made by the screw of a steamer. We sleep with our beds close to the mouth of one of these thermantidotes, and the bed is regularly wet from the effects of the moist air, but we can sleep in great comfort; the system is provocative of rheumatism however.

This is hardly what would be regarded as great comfort in England. A few days later White tells his sister that the thermometer had shown "116° in the shade under a very thick tree in my garden."

Nevertheless the English in Multan managed to get through some work, and to find some amusement:—

Amy was up at 5 o'clock, attended a *fête* for the native school children and presentation of prizes; had a breakfast party in our house at 10; out again at 6.30 P.M. to an evening continuation of the native *fête* and fireworks, where we stayed in a frightful atmosphere until 9.15, then home to a dinner party here. We sat down at 10.20, and the people did not leave till 2 A.M. As I was writing the foregoing Amy desired me to "tell Jane I was going to write to her, but this weather I am up to so very little." I call that bunkum, don't you? . . . The fireworks last night were good, one big Catherine wheel broke away from its stick and came, uttering terrific shrieks and spitting fire in showers of sparks, right at the ladies who, clad in the thinnest of muslins, ran for their lives; it really looked like some devil that had broken loose, and the ladies evidently thought he might take the hindermost.

On the 18th June he writes to his sister again:—

If the British army made the 18th June 1815 as hot for the French as Mooltan has made the 18th June 1876 for . . .

the Gordon Highlanders, I don't wonder at Bony and his army retiring in search of cooling drinks.

Did I ever tell you how hot it is in Mooltan? From one example learn all, or as the people in this country put it in Hindustani, "Ex uno disce omnes."

A very bad man died here last summer, & he suffered so awfully from rheumatism from the sudden change to a cold climate that even the devils pitied him, & sent the Salamander in waiting to ask his widow at Mooltan for his great-coat. Altho' the Salamander was dispatched at night to save the heat of a day journey to Mooltan, he was found dead of heat apoplexy at Sunrise.

Good-bye now, little Jane, I must retire to my couch, where a straw mat represents my bedding. . . .

Before the end of July both White and his wife had been down with fever, and he was suffering torment from that very trying disease "prickly heat." He writes to his brother, who was then in the Education Department :—

I read your 'Laws on Compulsory Education,' and heat and mosquitoes notwithstanding, I went to sleep over it. I wish you would tackle some lighter subject; however, you have made a very clear case against the draughtsmen of some of the Acts you have to work. What a blessing it would be if there was a legal code in England.

I am so much obliged to you for 'Daniel Deronda'; the last two Nos. out, Nos. 4 & 5, arrived on Monday last. Amy has read them both long ago, but I have had a good deal of work to do, and my head has been in a buzz from the effects of quinine ever since I got rid of the fever. I have been in command of the Brigade too, as well as the regiment, until a couple of days ago, as the senior officer had been down with fever for some time.

The beginning of August saw the end of Mrs White's troubles, as her husband insisted upon sending her away to Simla during a spell of freedom from fever. He remained for the rest of the hot weather, amusing himself as well as he could, but working and apparently gaining the confidence of his superior officers. On the 13th he writes to his brother :—

I wonder if you shot any grouse yesterday. We had a great afternoon at pretty polly. 150 green parrots fell before the scatter guns of the Gay Gordons, as 'Vanity Fair' calls us. . . . I have no doubt the authorities will do as I recommend, as they apparently believe in me, the effect being that if there is any troublesome work to be done I generally see in Division Orders: "A special Committee will assemble at Mooltan to report upon so & so. President Major G. S. White, 92nd Highdrs.; the officer comdg. at Mooltan will be good enough to detail two Captains as members to complete."

By the middle of September, his wife being safe in the cool air of Simla, White writes philosophically about the Indian climate :—

I begin to think that India cannot be such a very bad climate, as I am getting rather old in it now, & have escaped rheumatism, &c., wonderfully. I rather dread Ireland as a wind-up.

Meanwhile Lord Lytton, Disraeli's Viceroy, had succeeded Lord Northbrook, and preparations were now being made for the great Assemblage at Delhi, where the Queen was to be proclaimed Empress of India. There was to be a considerable gathering of troops, and the 92nd was one of the regiments

ordered to attend. White writes to his sister, Mrs Montgomery :—

The regiment has received orders to march to Sitapur. We start on the 2nd November, & I am very busy with work connected with our march. We halt at Delhi to help to make a lot at the Imperial show. I hear from Simla that the *fête* is to be the greatest ever seen in India. As we are on the march, and only making a temporary halt, we cannot do the thing in the style we would like. Fancy what we have before us! we march from Mooltan on the 2nd November, and the last half of the regiment gets into Benares on the 2nd March, a good long time to be walking. The Head Quarters go to Sitapur, where there is grand shooting, from tigers to snipe.

His sister had lately made the acquaintance of a man well known in India at that time, Major X., an officer of British cavalry who had risen from the ranks. We were all rather afraid of him, for he was fond of "chaff," and did not care what he said. White's letter goes on :—

So you met (h) old X. at Omburgh. He is a finished old rascal, but very amusing in a very low way; his repartees were very quick and used to be great fun.

(h) old X. wanted to make himself agreeable to a young lady at Simla, who of course hated him. "Why, Miss W., you are looking quite 'andsome to-day."

Miss W. doesn't like it, and replys, "More than I can say for you, Major X."—laugh for a moment against old X., who, however, recovered his position by this rejoinder: "So you could, Miss, if you was to tell a lie as I 'ave just done."

The quail had come in, and White was shooting again. He tells his brother that on the 1st of Sept-

ember he shot 36, and on the 2nd September 62. "I doubt if I shall be able to beat my last bag, as the powder was straight and I did it in two hours." That is good shooting. White had evidently not suffered seriously in "fitness" from his Multan summer; for the game little quail, though he has not the disconcerting jink of the snipe, is curiously easy to miss if a man is at all "off colour."

The new Viceroy's work in India was not to be confined to State ceremonials. He had come out with instructions to inaugurate a more active policy in the affairs of Central Asia; and he had with him as military secretary a man who threw himself into that policy heart and soul. This was Colonel George Pomeroy Colley, afterwards killed by the Boers at the famous action of Majuba. In 1876 Colley was studying the military position on the North-West Frontier, and some time in September he passed through Multan on his way to Beluchistan. White writes about this to his brother in an undated letter which I quote, as showing his opinion of Colley at this time. Later, when White had gained personal experience of the frontier and Afghanistan, he came to distrust Colley's judgment.

I met this morning at the train on his way to Khelat Colonel Colley, Mily. Sec. to the Viceroy, & my idea of the ablest man in our Army. We were cadets together at Sandhurst. He evidently did not want to talk much about the mission he was on, but I expect his opinion is wanted on the most probable line of Russian Advance, the Bolan Pass. We

have a force up there with a man called Sandeman[1] now, whom Colley is going to join. I gave him my blessing, two Dozen of Christophers' Perrier Jouet, & my best wishes for his Assassination, as it would inevitably be followed by the Advance of the Gordons.

Early in November the departure from Multan had taken place, and White was on leave in Simla with orders to rejoin the regiment at Delhi before Christmas. He writes from Simla to his brother :—

SIMLA, 15*th Novr.* 1876.

We had a wonderfully kind parting with the people of Mooltan. The Residents civil & military gave us a great dinner, and I had to make 2 speeches, one in return for the toast of the evening—the Gordon Highlanders—for which I was prepared to return thanks,—but the other took me quite unawares. But I got through quite to my own satisfaction; "The ladies of the 92nd, coupled with the name of that lady whose grace & winning manners had made her so deservedly, etc., etc." This allusion brought the house down regularly. I knew Madam Amy was a favourite, but even all the women haters came to the front & thundered their approval of the toast. . . .

Simla in November is a very great change from a Mooltan summer, but I never felt better in my life, and find I am still good up a hill.

P.S.—Brigade order by Brigadier-Genl. H. T. Macpherson, C.B., V.C. "Brigadier-General Macpherson, in taking leave of the Gordon Highrs., begs to express his high appreciation of their soldier-like conduct since he has had the honour of taking them under his Command.

[1] Afterwards Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman, K.C.S.I., one of the finest frontier officers India has ever had.

"The admirable Spirit which pervades all ranks, so clearly manifest to all who have had the good fortune to be associated with the 92nd, is due to the traditions of the Corps so ably maintained by the judgement & energy of Major White, assisted by the loyal support of those whom he so happily commands."

It was a fine send-off, and White was pleased by the terms of the Brigade Order, for he had a high opinion of Macpherson. The two were afterwards to be associated on active service, to the great satisfaction of both. Meanwhile Macpherson's words of approval no doubt increased White's enjoyment of his November in Simla.

And a November in Simla is delightful. The rains have passed away and the sky is cloudless. The air is dry and cold and life-giving. The long humming chirrup of the sun-cricket sounds from the branches of the pines, and a gentle breeze sweeps through them from the northward, where the snowy range stands out against the blue of the sky. At sunset the white peaks flush rose-red, and to the southward, across the gap where the monsoon clouds used to come pouring up from the plains, there now stretches the straight "cold weather line" of mist. It would be impossible to find a more refreshing change after the glare and the fierce heat and the dust-winds of Multan.

But White's senior in the regiment, Parker, was coming out again from England, and White was to lose the command of the 92nd; so, being now a married man, he made up his mind to apply for

the command of the Convalescent depôt at the hill-station of Naini Tal. It would, he wrote, give him two years in a beautiful climate. The post was not an active one, and it was generally given to very senior officers. Pending an answer to his application, White rejoined his regiment at Delhi in time for the Imperial Assemblage.

The assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India — Kaisar-i-Hind — was a sound stroke of policy, and the Assemblage was an impressive ceremonial. All the great native chiefs were gathered together, for the first time in the history of India, to do homage to a suzerain whose power extended from Beluchistan to Burma, and from the Himalayas to Ceylon; all classes of people from British India were represented; and a fine force of British and Indian troops added dignity to the gathering. Among the finest regiments in the force were the "Gay Gordons," and pending his senior's arrival White still commanded them.

Like every one else in India, he was at this time thinking about the possibility of a war with Russia on behalf of the Turks. The general feeling in India, among both Europeans and natives, was strongly pro-Turk, and White was no exception to the rule. But in spite of this, and of his natural desire for active service, he faced the facts with his usual cool sense.

I have changed my opinion about War [he writes to his brother], and think England cannot fight to prevent the Christian populations being fairly represented in the Government of Bulgaria, &c.

And a fortnight later he writes again—

I have given up hopes of war. . . .
As a soldier, I think the chances would have been against England and Turkey in the field. Russia could have thrown at least 500,000 or 600,000 men on the Danube, & we could not have got 30,000 into *first line* to resist her. The first engagemt. in the open would have done for us; an army called 50,000 strong in England would not furnish 30,000 men to shoot and thrust on the Danube.

Perhaps White overestimated the available strength of Russia, for as things turned out she found it no easy matter to overcome the Turks alone; but I quote the extracts to show that he was thinking, and thinking independently, on the whole question.

White was now a father, his first child having been born shortly after the Assemblage; and when a few months later he learnt that the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Haines, had given the Naini Tal depôt to a senior officer, he was inclined, for domestic reasons, to regret his loss of it. But I do not think his regret was very deep. "I am rather disappointed about it," he writes to his brother on the 2nd March '77, "more perhaps at having been a candidate than at the loss of the appointment." To those who knew him in after years, the idea of George White in charge of a convalescent depôt is amusing. The letter, which is written from Sitapur, goes on as follows:—

I shall not know what to do with myself in a day or two when Parker arrives, as I shall come down from having everything to do to having absolutely nothing to do in a

public Capacity. However, my private affairs require looking after & shall have it.

Sitapur is very dull; we are all in training for a great inter-Station Athletic Contest. I have to play Billiards, Rackets, Lawn Tennis, which is about enough to expect of an old Indian, amongst a lot of young 'uns, at 42. . . .

I do not know how the athletic contest went, but a few weeks later White was on leave in the hill-station of Naini Tal, enjoying the cool air, and grumbling at the bare rickety cottages which used to be called "furnished houses" in these stations. He writes to his brother on the 19th April:—

Amy is as usual full of life and energy. She has kicked this house and establishment into wonderful shape in the short time she has had to work them. She can shy about the dollars, but she does get the value of them.

The Lyttons are up here, and wanted her to go with them on a tour, but *mal à propos* I stand in the way, as I was expected. She is looking on and getting in a passion, at which game I can safely back her against the field. She sagely remarks, "Don't, George—that may do a great deal of harm," so you see your sister-in-law is a sensible woman.

And his wife writes across the page—

DEAR J. W.,—This letter of George's is not worth reading, I am sure, so I feel bound to add a few sensible remarks,

which she proceeds to do.

In July, after the breaking of the monsoon, White is still on leave.

To Miss Jane White.

NAINI TAL, *2nd July*, 77.

The rain is coming down in real Indian style, and my house leaks in nearly every room, & the one I am now writing in lets in the rain in about a dozen places. . . .

I am very sick of Naini Tal, and shall be very glad to get to the plains again when they are a little cooler. . . .

One can get tired of a Himalayan station in the rains, with the sun hidden perhaps for several days together, and the clouds drifting through the sodden pine-trees about the house, and a ceaseless thunder of rain on the wooden roof. But even the wet season has its pleasant things, glorious sunsets often enough, and magnificent thunderstorms, and sunny days, when the nearer mountains stand out with wonderful clearness of detail and depth of colour, backed by the white peaks of the snowy range. Any one who can see and feel gets to love the great "Hills," and in spite of occasional grumbling, no one got to love them better than George White.

Want of occupation was perhaps the real reason of his momentary discontent. Though he was beginning to read a good deal, he was never happy for long without sport and exercise, which are at times difficult to get in a hill-station when the rains have set in. Returned to Sitapur, he writes to his brother on the 18th September:—

Once more I am writing under a punkah, with the "Heat Watch," as the natives call it, the thermometer, at 90°, but I am glad of the change as I have something to do here,

which I had not at Naini Tal; in fact, had it not been for the war in Turkey, I would absolutely have detested the place, but going to the reading rooms, two miles from my house, in search of telegrams from Plevna, &c., gave me interest in a walk. . . .

I had a very hot journey back here from the hills, as I travelled during the day, being anxious to see what the country looked like. In Oudh, from Lucknow to this place, I would have supposed that a bad famine was a necessary consequence of the dried-up & cropless ground, but the civilians say that prospects are not so bad; grain is however getting very dear, & robberies & other lawless acts are on the increase in the neighbourhood.

This house is on the outside edge of the Station, & consequently I am on the look-out for midnight marauders. Anything like the number of snakes in & about this house I have never seen in India. As I drove up to the verandah the day I arrived the first thing I saw was a snake about 4 feet long that had just been killed by one of the servants, making fifty-three that have been caught & killed about the house this summer. My soldier servant (who is also the Colonel's) entertained me the evening of my arrival by bringing me bottle after bottle of reptiles of sorts, from huge cobras down to scorpions and centepedes, that he had been in at the death of since April last. . . .

This sounds worse than the Hills, though even there scorpions are to be found at times in the firewood, and the little silvery fish insect destroys one's papers and books, and the scream of the cicada at sunset from the fern-laden branches of the trees is almost deafening. I do not remember ever seeing a poisonous snake in the upper hills, though they may exist.

To Miss Jane White.

SITAPUR, OUDH, *5th Oct.* 77.

It has been so frightfully hot up to to-day that it has been a great labour to get through one's daily work, of which I often have a great deal, as I like to see & do things for myself, & not trust altogether to subordinates. We have had a few drops of rain, & it looks as if we might have more; the natives are in great delight at the prospect, and are tom-toming at a great pace in the bazaar close to my house by way of keeping the rain-giving god up to his work. It is anything but a pleasant sight to see the very poor classes already patting their shrivelled stomachs & shouting "Sahib hungry." . . .

I don't feel up to much, so won't write more. I fancy I have got an attack of fever coming on, as I have nearly dislocated my jaw the last ten minutes by a succession of awful yawns, a very sure sign with me that quinine's the word. . . .

White suffered from malarial fever at intervals throughout his Indian life, and many do, but it is by no means the case with all Europeans in the country.

He was now contemplating leave to England, for this letter contains a passage—

Amy is to remain at Naini Tal till the end of this month. She then comes here for the cold weather & we go home about March. . . .

The following are passages from his letters written during the early months of 1878 :—

To John White.

SITAPUR, OUDH, *4th Jany.* 78.

It is some time since I have written to you, or indeed to anyone else, & I don't know that this is likely to be a very connected letter, as a small boy, Master Evny Kennedy, is parading a small tin horse & a large china cat in front of my nose, and requesting to be informed how a cat can be so much bigger than a horse. . . .

I intend going off on a snipe-shooting trip, when I hope to get a couple of real good days. I have had some good days—the best being 3 guns 70 couple, and alone 30½ couple.

I am not looking forward to the preparations for the move homewards with any great pleasure; it is a real troublesome job breaking up an establishment out here the size of mine & selling off. I hope you will stick to your intention of coming out to Italy if we go home that way, but I have decided nothing as yet; it would be a real pleasure to me to look forward to a few weeks in Italy with you. I believe we shall be at war within a month, which may alter all arrangements, as I hope the 92nd will form part of any force going from India against the Russians; I only wish they would do something towards increasing the army & look sharp about it, or we shall have no counters to play with. . . .

We are having very cold weather, which does not suit me too well; however, I manage to keep right by taking lots of exercise—to-morrow I have to run in a hurdle race for field officers & ride two steeplechases. I expect to be sick after the first, & to break my neck in the one or other of the chases, as my horses are very raw. . . .

To Mrs Montgomery.

SITAPUR, *4th Jany.* 78.

We have had a house full of visitors since the 23rd December, all pleasant people, and I think little Sitapur has done its duty in the social line. The Commander-in-Chief was

here on the 19th Dec., I think it was, & gave the 92nd the very highest praise on every point. . . .

I have not yet decided times for our moving homewards, & indeed I think it highly probable that matter will be arranged a good deal for us by a declaration of war with Russia before long; if so, I think the sooner Mrs W. & Miss W. get to England the better. . . .

To John White.

SITAPUR, 11*th Jany.* 78.

I think I wrote to you last week that I was going in for a hurdle race on foot and two steeplechases. I rode a big Waler I have got for the chase, but he commenced to buck-jump when he ought to have started, & I was left at the post & had to go over the course by myself, and got a fall into the bargain. . . .

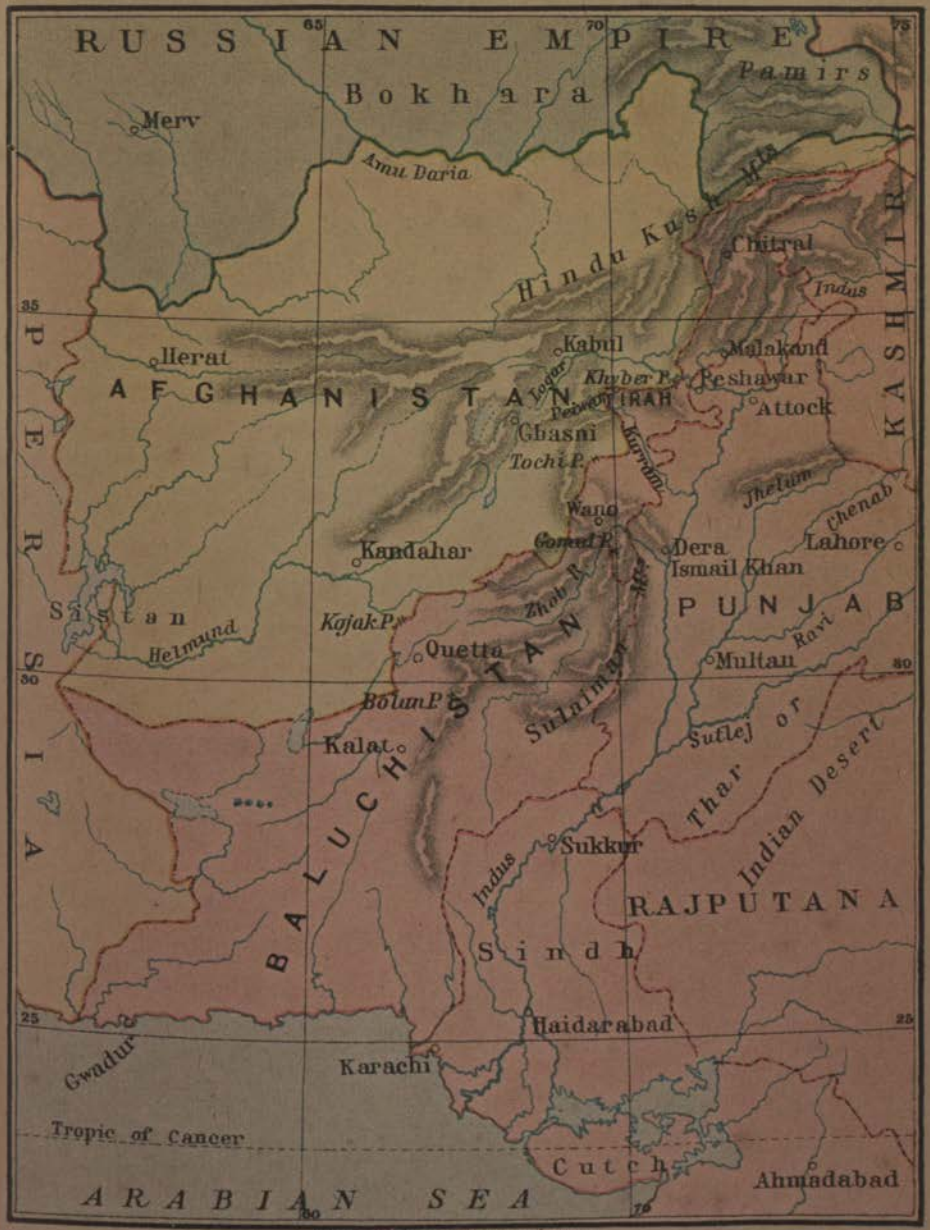
White was at this time exercised in mind by hearing that the Commander-in-Chief wanted to appoint him Assistant Adjutant-General at Headquarters on the occurrence of an expected vacancy. It was a proof that he stood well in the opinion of his superiors, and the appointment would have given him interesting work, and a large increase of pay, besides the good climate of Simla. Moreover, he would have been "on the spot for anything that is going." He was therefore inclined to accept it if offered, provided that he could first take a few months' leave to settle his affairs at home. The vacancy did not immediately occur, and in March he sailed for Europe, still uncertain whether the appointment was to come to him. There is nothing in his papers to show whether he heard anything more of the matter, but he certainly

never took up the post, and the remainder of his letters of 1878, of which there are very few, deal with his private affairs. After his arrival in England he spent the rest of the year partly at Whitehall and partly in England with his wife's mother, who was seriously ill, and for whom he had a strong affection.

Meanwhile there had been great excitement in India, and towards the close of the year the long-expected advance across the Afghan frontier had taken place. We were not at war with Russia, but we had crossed her in Europe by intervening when she had beaten the Turks and was in sight of Constantinople. Foiled in her long-cherished desire, and full of natural resentment, she struck back at us by sending a Mission to the Amir of Afghanistan. We thereupon insisted upon his receiving a British Mission, which he would not do, and Lord Lytton's Government declared war against him. Then followed the Afghan campaign of 1878.

It was short and decisive. Our troops advanced in three columns, striking heavy blows. In the Khyber Pass the northern column, under General "Sam" Browne, took the great key-fort of Ali Masjid, and opened the Pass, which led direct to the Amir's capital at Kabul. In the centre Sir Frederick Roberts stormed the Peiwar Kotul, and opened an alternative route by the Logar valley. In the south, a few weeks later, Sir Donald Stewart occupied Kandahar. The Amir, hopeless of holding Kabul, fled northwards to appeal to the Russians,

AFGHANISTAN AND THE N. W. FRONTIER



W. & A. K. Johnston, Limited, Edinburgh & London.

Scale of Miles

100 50 0 100 200 300 400 500 M.

who advised him to make his peace with the English; and in February 1879 he died, heartbroken.

In this campaign the 92nd Highlanders had borne no share. Their station was at a great distance from the North-West Frontier, and there were troops enough within reach. It must have seemed to George White, as he read at Whitehall the telegrams about the fighting, that his old ill-luck with the Inniskillings was to follow him again, and that as he had passed through the Mutiny twenty years before without seeing a shot fired, so now he was to look on inactive while the great chance for which every soldier in India had been longing fell to the lot of others.

But though the Afghan regular army had been beaten, and our columns had been halted, a formal peace had not been arranged. Pending a final settlement, and in case an advance on Kabul should prove necessary, it was thought desirable to send some fresh troops to the frontier, and the 92nd was ordered to join the central column under Sir Frederick Roberts.

George White was skating near Broughshane when a telegram was brought to him giving him the news. A few days later he was once more on his way to India, leaving his wife and child behind him. At last, after more than twenty-five years of service, there seemed to be a chance that he might see some fighting.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARCH TO KABUL.

1879.

On the 21st February 1879 White was again in India, and on the 14th of March he writes to his wife from Kohat, on the North-West Frontier—

Reached Kohat yesterday morning, and found the regiment on parade for the Commander-in-Chief. I had a grand chance of inspecting the old Ninety-twa's as they marched past me into Camp, Parker at their head looking very well. I thought the men looked a little lean to be starting on hard work, but they appeared fit and healthy. . . . We are all fitted out in khalki, and won't look in the least like the old 92nd; however, the men stick to their kilts, which will distinguish them. We have discarded all our white belts and steel scabbards, and have our swords sharp and in leather scabbards. In fact I am fitted more as if going on a shooting excursion than on a campaign.

This was apparently White's first introduction to the now universal "kháki," which by the way simply means earth-like, earth colour, from the Persian word "khák," earth, dust.

To John White. *7th March* 79.

Here I am at last with the Ninety-twa's again—and the first sight of them gave me a sensation. I met them march-

ing from an inspection by the C.-in-C., who has passed through this & gone on to the front. We march on Thursday to join Roberts' Column in the Khuram Valley, and are there to await eventualities. Oxley & I, after a false start in native jaunting cars, left Rawal Pindee, marching for Kohat; we walked from 20 to 25 miles a day & arrived fresh & well. The road, which is the only supply line for Roberts' Column, is in a very bad state; the stinking carcases of baggage animals, mules, bullocks, & camels, offend the nose every few yards. I was astonished that more had not been done towards making this supply line really good; but I hear the Government won't spend the money. I hear it is worse in front, but I shall be able to say more about it by next mail as we march towards the Peiwar.

The Regiment is not well equipped, short of socks & shoes, two very necessary articles, but they look very well indeed, and are universally admired.

This is a pretty valley, with low hills all round; the people are a fine-looking manly lot, but are not to be trusted; when we go outside the station we all carry revolvers and keep our eyes about us. I have gone in for a heavy stick, which I think will keep any fanatic with a knife off, or at all events make him sick before he gets *home* on me.

. . . Good-bye for the present. My next will, I hope, tell of an immediate advance on Kabul.

To Miss Jane White.

CAMP, SURAZYE,
29*th March* 1879.

I have not written much . . . as it is often a difficult matter to sit down & struggle with a sheet of paper on your knee; however, here we are, the gay 92nd, tramp, tramp, tramp towards the front to join Genl. Roberts' Column. . . .

We are told off to advance on Cabul, the 72nd Highldrs. & our regiment being the two white regiments to go on with Roberts.

Marching in the plains as we are at present is very hot work, but we have been lucky in having rain, which has cooled the air for a couple of days; however the thermometer in our tents has been up to 95° in the middle of the day, a great change from the temperature I left you in.

This morning (altho' cloudy) I saw one man in the ranks who had perspired, not only through his clothes, which were perfectly wet, but through his leather belts.

We are not hard up for supplies, however, yet, and were it not for bad water & the horrible stench of dead pack animals on the road & in the camp grounds we would have little to complain of; however, it will be a great blessing to get into the hills, and consequently into a cooler climate.

The country we have marched through from Kohat is a very wild one, the road generally running through valleys commanded on both sides by high rocky hills. The district is thinly populated, and the houses are towers built as little fortifications, the doors being ten to fifteen feet above the ground, and approached by means of a rope ladder which can be pulled up at a moment's notice. The people are robbers and cut-throats, and are only kept in awe by their great fear of our reprisals; in fact the state of society must be much what it was in the old days of the Highland Clans. The subject that thaws the coldest and most haughty native is Arms; they delight in revolvers, & are always asking how many tamashas (Amy will translate) they make, meaning how often they go off. They also pay great attention to the pipes. We have a very large Camp, a number of elephants carrying Mitrailleuses and ammunition, besides 9 camels laden with treasure, and above a mile in length of camels carrying the kits of officers and men. I much prefer this kind of life to being quiet in a station in India, and so far I have been in capital health; I have got accustomed to sleeping in my clothes & without luxuries, and hope I may keep all right for the work I think we shall have to do. . . .

To Mrs White.

ALI KHEYL, 22*nd March*.

We are still in doubt whether we are to advance on Cabul or not. We have been here now a week, and have had very bad weather. It is snowing hard, in great large flakes, and yesterday morng. the water outside our tents was covered with ice ½ an inch thick.

This sort of life, in this weather, with a tent about as thick as a pocket handkerchief, . . . without books or a mess, and living on rations, becomes monotonous, not to say uncomfortable, but I am afraid it would be terrible work crossing the Shutur Gardan in such weather.[1] We have been ornamenting our Camp with quaint devices and entrenching ourselves with stone walls. In fact the Camp looks a good deal like an Irish farm—equally stony and fenced in the same way.

Charley (White's native servant) has lately paid me a visit to show me that "Ish snow make him all white." He is a very good fellow, delights in getting me little extra comforts; one day he brings me a couple of mutton chops, another day a cake, and when questioned where they come from, he says, "I get them, Master eat."

There are sometimes funny scenes in Camp; a day or two ago I saw Mr Boyd toiling up the hill on which we are camped with a sheep over his shoulders. Mr Hamilton[2] was seen with a couple of live chickens which he had secured from a friendly villager. . . .

We marched into Kurram yesterday, and I met a number of old friends. I dined with General Roberts, who made very particular enquiries about you all, even to the "White Rose,"[3] whom he called as written. He looks very worn and old; all the responsibility of commanding an expedition like this, and the adverse criticism, must be very trying. As I write

[1] Shutur Gardan means camel's neck, which gives some idea what the pass was like.

[2] Now General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., &c.

[3] White's daughter.

this I can see the Peiwar Kotul just above me, and I am glad he had to decide how to attack it and not I. We are under orders to advance, or be ready to advance on the 20th over the Shutur Gardan . . . to Cabul without tents. Last night at dinner with General Roberts at Army Head Quarters it appeared so odd to be asked by swells like Brab, on his personal staff,[1] whether you would have Whisky or Rum after your soup, and yet they offered all that was to be had. . . .

The most bloodthirsty of the officers are Messrs Hamilton and Forbes, both as keen as cayenne. The former has a private Army list in which he makes a forecast of probable promotion, drawing a line through probable casualties thus: ~~Major White~~ "too old to stand the fatigues of a campaign," &c., &c. However, the poor laddie has been carried in a doolie himself instead from the effects of exposure, fatigue, and bad water. He is such a nice lad. . . .

I am very fit, and my old friends the Snows make me feel as strong as an ibex hunter; my greatest regret is that I cannot try the ascent of Sita Ram, a grand old white head 15,000 odd feet high right over my head, but there are more things to beware of than the pine tree's withered branch and the awful avalanche on its steep sides, and it would be folly to attempt it.

To Mrs White.

ALI KHEL, *16th April* 1879.

We halted at this Camp on Good Friday, and I enjoyed the luxury of a tub and a long lie in bed; heavy hail in the forenoon and thunder. In the afternoon I rode down the valley to a group of villages called Shahlazān, where there was a great deal of cultivation, and some beautiful fruit trees now clothed in most bright blossom; the Chinar trees[2] are also famous, as is also the beauty of the Shahlazān ladies;

[1] Now Major-General Sir John Brabazon, K.C.B., &c.

[2] Eastern plane.

this last we had no opportunity of ascertaining by personal experience. . . .

About nine o'clock we saw a long line of people and camels slowly winding their way up the valley towards the Pass; these turned out to be a Caravan, or Kafila, of Mulla Khels, a subdivision of the great Ghilzae tribe on their return to the highlands of Cabul for the summer months after having wintered in Hindustan.

The custom of these tribes is to cross over the passes from Cabul, as soon as the winter is over, with their wives, children, camels, sheep, and goats. The camels, loaded with merchandise, find their ways into every bazaar in Hindustan from Kohat in the remote N.W. to Calcutta and Benares. Their women and children, flocks and herds, they deposit in safety within our borders but trans Indus, with a guard to await the return of the traders in the spring, when the whole tribe turn their heads towards the cooler hills of Cabul, often fighting their way desperately against the hill tribes and robbers . . . whose hill fastnesses provide a safe retreat in case of defeat, while their numerous defiles offer points for attack of a long string of animals very favourable to the assailants.

They had about five or six hundred camels with them, hill camels that travel in groups, not strung together in a long line from tail to nose, but picking their own way like goats over the roughest watercourses and hills. These camels would be invaluable to us when crossing the Shutur Gardan, where plain camels will die in hundreds, and the C.O. here wired to Kurram, the headquarters of General Roberts, to know if he should stop the Kafila and buy the camels, but wiser counsels, as I think, prevailed, and they were allowed to proceed on their way, although they allowed they would have to throw in their lot with their own people against us when we advance.

As they filed past us the men, with matchlocks slung over their shoulders, and huge Afghan knives in their belts, passed with a haughty stare, neither saluting nor speaking, and not even deigning to turn round to get a second look. The women

displayed more curiosity, and the shaggy hill dogs snarled their dislike of the infidels.

When a pack had to be readjusted the men strode on and the women put the load to rights.

At first I wondered if the women timed the birth of their infants so as not to interfere with their tribal migrations, as I could see no infant in arms, but closer observation showed me that there were many infants, though not in arms, cradled on the backs of their rough camels. Here and there a tiny foot or a wee brown hand peeping out of a bundle of carpet rugs asserted the presence of an outside passenger where it was difficult to believe such passenger could escape dislocation from vibration and suffocation from non-ventilation.

In the evening M'Gregor, Hamilton, and I followed these people up to their camp ground, and found them very snug in tents formed of camel's hair cloth roughly stretched over poles. They were very closely packed. The men came out to talk to us and were delighted with our watches and revolvers. M'Gregor fired his revolver to show them what it could do, and they declared we were very wonderful people, and that in Kabul they had not our bund-o-bast (organisation). . . .

Easter Sunday.

All our plans upset. Orders to reduce our camp equipage by half, and only to take ⅔ of our personal baggage. . . . This order looks like an advance on Cabul, so we cheerfully set about the impossible task of making ourselves comfortable on 53 lbs. of baggage; our mess was closed, servants paid up and dismissed; in future we draw our rations with the men, and like them are allowed two tots of rum a day. Real campaigning now. No more truffles and champagne till we have taken the Bala Hissar[1] at Caubul. . . .

15th, Tuesday.

Turned out at 4.30 in a biting cold wind that went through one. Some of the tents were blown down. Mine stood, but I

[1] The High Citadel.

found that I was constantly awoke by the wind beating the end of my small tent against my head as the canvas flapped.

The cold at starting was very great, but we crowned the Kotul in 46 minutes, walking very slowly, and were warm enough. On the top of the Kotul the water was all frozen hard, and hot coffee and the protection of a log hut were well timed hospitalities on the part of the 8th Regiment, who now hold this very cold quarter. Luckily for them the pines growing all round bring endless fuel and the material for log huts to their very feet. As usual when we halted we piled arms, but the wind soon hurled them to the ground, and we had to lay them flat down.

The view from the Kotul, and indeed all the way down the route to Ali Khel, was magnificent. The splendid peaks of the Sufaid Koh [1] raised their haughty heads into a cloudless sky; but we could see that it was blowing a hurricane on their high level, although we had no cloud-drift to mark its force. The snow was upraised and blown in light and fleecy curls round the topmost peaks, an effect I have never seen before, and I shall never forget these hoary-headed giants with their white locks blown about their sunlit brows. . . .

We are now camped at an elevation of 8000 feet, and for the last two days the sky has been cloudless. . . .

To John White.

KURRAM FIELD FORCE, CAMP ALI KHEYL,
29th April 79.

We are still in a state of uncertainty as to whether we advance or retire. I still believe we shall go on, and I wish to God I was commanding. . . . We shall have to force our way over the most infernal country to advance through and the most beautiful country to defend I have ever seen.

The roads are nearly all simple water-courses at the bottom of defiles, with great mountain ranges on either side which send down spurs sometimes right down to either bank of the

[1] White Mountain.

river, and which spurs command the whole bed of the river. Of course if our march is opposed we must crown the heights, and as the heights are sometimes 2, 3, & 4 thousand feet higher than the river bed, men ought to be trained to the work or they must break down the day they are called upon to act.

White had now made friends with some officers of the Engineers, who were carrying out a survey of the country round Ali Khel; and, always keen to see what he could, he joined them in an expedition to a mountain north of the camp. He notes in his diary :—

Thursday, 24th.

Was awake a little after 3 by a shot fired by a sentry close to my tent at what he said was a prowling Afghan (probably a dog); packed bedding & went across to Plateau A whistling very loud "British Grenadiers," my best tune, & not a likely one for a prowling Afghan, as I was much more afraid of the sentries than of the enemy. Great delay in getting under weigh, as the morning was very cold. Started at last for Ali Kheyl where the Native Infantry Escort and guides of the Jagi tribe had to be worried out, and the latter warned by their Mullicks not to cut our throats.

The Mullicks are the head men of villages.

The party consisted of Capt. Woodthorpe & Martin, Engineers, Capt. Straton, 22nd Regiment, chief heliograph signaller, Major White, 92nd Highdrs, *en amateur*, 3 privates 72nd Highlanders, passed heliograph signallers, about 12 natives soldiers, and 3 or four Jagi guides.

We started in hopes of being able to communicate from the top of Matungi, 12,600 ft., with the Peshawur Column at Gundamuk, by heliograph. We left Ali Kheyl at 6 A.M. exactly, and after a climb of 2½ hours arrived at the commencement of snow. 1500 ft. more brought us to the top,

where I arrived 10 minutes to 11. We had a beautiful day, but were disappointed in communication with Gundamuk.

The Safaid Koh only showed one breach in its otherwise impenetrable curtain, & this opening was a long way west of Gundamuk, and, according to our guides, in the direction of Jagdallick. As soon as the party reached the top, about 1 P.M., Woodthorpe observed all the principal peaks round the circle. I wrote them down for him in his field register. The cold was very great on the top, particularly sitting writing for three hours.

Our leading Jagi guide was a very picturesque figure, wonderfully handsome in face, with huge shoulders & limbs, his long jizail slung over his broad back—the type of a mountaineer & a robber. We became great friends, and I shared some of his cakes made of Indian corn as we sat together on the top. We had not a word in common except the names of places, but a significant sign across my throat and a finger pointed in the direction of a valley "far, far beneath us" elicited the information I wanted, viz., whether the tribes inhabiting it had "come in"—*i.e.*, given in their submission. . . .

The disaster at Isandula, where the Zulus destroyed a battalion of British infantry, had happened not long before; and White, writing in his cold wind-blown tent on the slopes of the White Mountain, lashed out savagely at the way in which Lord Chelmsford had been reviled. It is unnecessary to quote his words at length, but his general conclusion was: "I agree with you in not blaming Chelmsford, his orders and all his movements were good." White always felt indignant, and rightly indignant, at the proneness of the British public to heap blame upon any commander who suffered a reverse in war. It is not the high Roman

fashion. And as British commanders are almost invariably sent out to make war with numbers too small for the work required of them, it is surely the more incumbent upon their countrymen to be loyal to them when they fail to achieve success in a game which at best is full of chances.

To Mrs White.

CAMP ALI KHEYL, *6th May* 1879.

It is very provoking that nearly always when I sit down to write I am prevented from doing so by a gale of wind or a hailstorm, my whole tent being so shaken that it is quite impossible to write legibly. This is very much the case now; however, the squalls pass by as suddenly as they approach. There have been very few days since we arrived here that I have not got a ducking, quite a new experience of India, and particularly unpleasant where one's only employment is in climbing very steep hills, with the expectation of a fine view and a rest on the top, which expectation often turns out very differently. Climb, climb, climb, and sob, sob, sob, up a hill like the side of a house, under a hot sun, every "clo" on you wet with perspiration. Just as you reach the top, down comes a cloud obscuring everything around, emptying itself on your ill-fated head, in snow or hailstones as big as marbles, and an iced wind that freezes the marrow in your bones. . . .

I got a fall yesterday afternoon which has made me lie up to-day, as I am in a fright of being *hors de combat* in case of a fight anywhere. . . . I hurt my foot and knee, but hope to be the ibex of the hill again to-morrow or next day.

White goes on to describe an early morning expedition up a conical hill 11,000 feet in height, to get a view of the valley below, which General Roberts was to reconnoitre that day.

I sent a message to General Roberts that I could search the defile for 9 miles, and it was all clear. Not that he would have cared much if it hadn't been.

These Irishmen understood one another.

Captain Rennick, an assistant political officer here, a real wild, plucky fellow, with whom I have struck up an acquaintance, sent me a little black ghaini[1] yesterday, and I have employed Charley to salt part of the beef—it will be a help to our rations. In fact, at present we are in great luxury, as we got four bottles of beer each the day before yesterday. What with extra beef and a bottle of beer I am afraid that Ali Kheyl may prove a modern Capua and enervate the hardy Highland man. . . .

We had a great inter-regimental game of rounders with the 72nd yesterday. General Roberts came over & was as cheery and pleasant as ever. . . . Captain Prettyman,[2] an artillery officer, is my favourite on Bobs' staff. . . . Rain, rain, rain, turned out a very wild afternoon, and the row it makes on my little tent & the way it shakes through are most prejudicial to letter-writing. . . . One has no sooner commenced to write than the whole canvas appears to be lifted up into the air and let down again with a noise like thunder, accompanied by a copious shower of rain. . . .

We have a horse show to-day (7th May), got up by a sporting parson, Mr Adams,[3] so I hope the rain won't come down again. I am a judge. . . . General Roberts ought to get first prize for his grey Arab charger, a very pretty one.

White had evidently come to the conclusion by this time that Arabs were not all the "ugly brutes" he

[1] Gaini are small cattle, not much bigger than sheep.

[2] Now Major-General Pretyman, C.B., R.A.

[3] The Rev. John Adams, who afterwards won a Victoria Cross in Kabul. He was a fine horseman, and one of the truest soldiers in the Force.

thought them when he first came to India. And General Roberts did get first prize, with a horse which has become historical—"Kandahar."

White's letter closes with the words—

I have seen neither a white shirt nor a sheet since the 26th March last, and have slept in my clothes for more than a month. It agrees with me, as I never felt better, & am told I am getting quite fat. Love to Mrs Baly, and kiss little babs for me.

The time had now come when White was to face the music which afterwards became so familiar to him, the song of an enemy's bullet. It was in a petty skirmish that he saw his first shot fired, and he was a Major nearly forty-four years of age.

To John White.

CAMP ALI KHEYL, 19*th May* 79.

I hope to get well on to the Shutur Gardan this week, as General Roberts has promised to let the Survey R.E.'s go, and I am now nearly always one of their party,—in fact the only one allowed to go "en amateur." We must have a stronger escort or we shall be coming to grief some day. . . .

To Miss Jane White.

KHURRAM VALLEY FIELD FORCE,
21*st May* 79.

We are all in very bad spirits to-day; the last telegram says that the Amir Yakub Khan has agreed to all our conditions, so the war is over. We (are ?) like a chimney in summer, our occupation gone. However, we are in a lovely climate and surrounded by magnificent hills, which hills ought to save one from too great ennui, as they are to a great extent

virgin peaks, and afford a rare opportunity to a man fond of climbing. . . .

I don't know whether you will have heard of my little engagement with some of the Ahmad Kheyl, who marched upon a peak that I was spending the day on with a couple of officers of Engineers, who were surveying. Well, we thought we were in for a hot corner, as they were in considerable numbers, about 130 or 140, and we had only two British soldiers & 5 sepoys, the latter not much good; however, after challenging us, flourishing their long knives & jizails and firing at us, they did not seem to like our position, which was a crow's nest in its way, & would have enabled us to make a capital defence. When I found they did not mean coming to the mountain, I left the crow's nest to reconnoitre, & finding a way I could cut in on them a bit, I signalled to a Corporal of the 72nd to send me his rifle. He came himself, and altho' I pointed out a lot of the rascals firing & gave him very steady shots, I thought we had not hit any. However, they have since sent to our political officer to say that they don't intend to have us as masters, & that they have to reckon with us for five lives, four killed at the battle of the Peiwar Kotal and one by us on Saturday week. This is rather cool, as they came at us and had attacked a lot of our wood-cutters the same day.

I think they thought that we would leg it when they threatened us with attack, as they knew how few we were, & that they would have had an opportuity of looting everything we had, & perhaps polishing us off in easier ground. . . .

As soon as things are a little settled here I may try to get on to Cabul as a visitor. I have reason to think that I shall be allowed to go if anybody is from this force.

I would, above all things, like to wander over the Shutur Gardan range, with the wild Ghilzai tribes. Perhaps I may be able to arrange this yet.

A couple of days later White heard that a son had been born to him, which was perhaps some consolation

for the lost chance of an advance on Kabul. The boy was christened James Robert, after his grandfather, and White writes, "I hope he will turn out as straightforward, honest, and brave a man."

It had now been decided to send a British Envoy to reside in Kabul, and Lord Lytton had selected for the post Sir Louis Cavagnari, a well-known frontier officer, who had conducted the peace negotiations. About this White writes to his wife on the 21st June in words which read sadly now—

> Cavagnari is to form his Camp at Kohat about the 25th June. . . . His staff is to be very small, only two men mentioned. Hamilton of the Guides is to command the Escort, consisting of 25 Sabres and 50 Infantry of that Corps. I think they are right not to invite assassination by sending too many white men in the first instance. Until the fanatical Mahomedans get accustomed to the white face & Kafir costume they are apt to get carried away by religious frenzy and use their formidable knives.

The smallness of Cavagnari's European staff did not save him. Within three months he and his escort had been massacred.

To John White.

ALI KHEYL, *24th June* 79.

I am once more on the world, having applied for leave, which is likely to be granted, for two months to Simla. Parker goes away, & Hay is anxious to remain, so I have humoured him. I am sick of this place. All excitement is over, and peace brings no advantages to compensate. Strict orders not to go more than a mile from Camp without an Armed Escort. I have been twice caught breaking this rule,

& think it is better to be off, as I cannot stand taking a walk with Alister M'Allister & Jock M'Tavish carrying their rifles immediately behind me. . . .

I leave Ali Kheyl to-morrow, going with my friends the Survey Engineers to the foot of the Sita Ram, the highest peak in the Sufaid Koh. We are to try the ascent next day. There is another peak which looks more difficult lower down the valley, & I hope to have a try at it also. I would not be at all surprised to find it the higher of the two.

After these two expeditions I have a terrible journey down a cholera-stricken valley to get to Kohat, where I can get civilized means of travelling.

If Simla bores me I shall break away in some new direction. Captain Martin of the Survey has been warned to hold himself in readiness to go to Ghilgit in about the wildest country in the wilds of Ladak, and has asked me to join him. I may do so, but would require longer leave. Simla, however, is the place to get what you want, & I dare say I might manage it from there. . . .

Before going to Simla White spent a few days at another hill-station, Murree, whence he writes to his brother on the 13th July :—

The ascent of Sita Ram was merely a long walk with some rock-climbing at the top. Some of our heliograph signallers, soldiers, carried their arms & about 40 rounds of ammunition to the top, so you may imagine it was not very bad going. Most of the rifles were a bit damaged, but none of them injured for work. I suppose a British soldier never was marched so high before, 15,600 feet. No doubt soldiers have been to greater heights on their own affairs, but I cannot recall any expedition on duty which led up to so great an elevation. The day was thick, and we did not get as good a view as we ought; however the Khyber & the Khurram lay fairly clearly below us & we could see Kabul with the eye

of faith through the mist. The last thousand feet or so, the air was very rarefied, and I had, contrary to my custom, to halt frequently. However, I felt it far less than any of the rest of the party and made the top in 5 hours. We started at 4.15 A.M. from 8600 ft. and I reached the top at 9.20, 15,600 ft. The engineer officer of the Survey, Captain Woodthorpe, was next, but many of the party lay down & never got to the top. The bulk of those who did get up arrived between 12 & 1. Some as late as 2 P.M. . . .

White tells his wife, in a letter on the same subject, that the "old major of the 92nd with twenty-six years' service was sitting on the top for fifty minutes before anyone else, except a couple of wild mountain men-guides, got up."

In spite of his forty-four years and his bald head he was evidently still "good on a hill-side," and rightly proud of it, for it was largely the result of a temperate life and steady exercise. It was to be of great service to him before long.

His letter goes on to discuss a question which was then much in men's minds. As I have shown, he had two years before been full of admiration for the abilities of Colonel Colley, the most enthusiastic advocate of a Forward policy in Central Asia; and most of the soldiers by whom White was surrounded were in favour of such a policy. Nevertheless, with his usual independence of thought, White had now come to an opposite conclusion, and said so plainly.

I am now more than ever convinced, in my own mind, that the advance in search of a scientific frontier was a mistake, and that far from strengthening our position, we have ad-

vanced to share the difficulties with Russia. I suppose we have lost 40 or 50,000 camels from find to finish in this business. Why not let Russia have the loss instead of us? The plight our men arrived in on the banks of the Indus a week or two ago does not look as if our advance of frontier had added much to our strength, yet our men were backed by all the resources of India close at hand. What would be the plight of a Russian army if we held the mouth of the passes on the Indian side & locked them up in the passes? They would disappear off the face of the earth. The money spent on this campaign would have given us a circular railway round the frontier, & lines radiating from strategical centres would have enabled up to pour fresh & healthy troops on any point threatened. As to the effect on India, I would much prefer the chance of keeping India quiet when the troops were marched in Hindustan & on railways, to the superiority we are supposed to be credited with by the natives on account of having crawled into the bear's den to meet him.

As far as the hill tribes are concerned the loot of the cities of Hindustan will ever be a greater inducement to join the Russians than anything we can offer against it. In the plains we could mow down their hordes, but in their own hills we cannot master them even when we have no other enemy to deal with. . . .

White was strengthened in this view of the question by reports that some of our young soldiers had not shown in Afghanistan the steadiness which marked the British soldier of the old long-service type. Readers of Rudyard Kipling will remember "The Drums of the Fore and Aft." That story was perhaps not wholly without a foundation of fact. It may be hoped that White's natural preference for the long-service soldier made him a little unfair to the

new type. He was to see young soldiers fight very steadily before his own service came to an end. But in 1879 he had no belief in them.

> There are a few fine regiments still left out here [he writes], the 92nd, 72nd, 5th Fusiliers, 17th, and others that I have not heard so much of, but they will soon be ruined by short service, and the ranks filled with sickly, undisciplined boys who can neither march nor fight. . . . It is lamentable to see the difference between a fine native regiment and the undersized, ill-shaped modern British soldier. If some radical reform is not made in our army we shall be let in for a disaster the very first time we are fairly tried.

And he quotes a case in which some young soldiers had retired rather hastily, "remarking that they were damned if they were going to be Isandulaed." On which it may perhaps be suggested that the remark, though doubtless reprehensible, does not sound like the terror of panic. It reminds one of the story which one used to hear of an old Indian cavalry soldier whose squadron was galloping hard to the rear, pressed by a superior force of Afghan horsemen. The British officers were trying to stop the retirement with shouts of Halt, Halt, and the old soldier was heard to growl out, "Kaun b——. Halt bolta? Yih halt ke wakt nahin hai. What . . . is calling Halt? This is not the time for Halting." He was not frightened, but at the moment he thought discretion the better part of valour. When White wrote he had not yet seen serious fighting. Yet it must be allowed that many experienced soldiers, who had seen much fighting, regarded the long-service man as

more trustworthy than the man with whom steadiness in sudden emergencies had not become a matter of habit.

A few days later White was in Simla, which he preferred to Murree, but he was hankering after some sport in Kashmir, and writes to his wife: "Civilisation does not agree with me, and the hard life does." Also to his brother: "Am rapidly losing all the good effects of the rough life in this horrid Civilisation."

His letter goes on: "Just off to play lawn tennis with A. C. Lyall, who is now a power in the state. You know his writings."

Alfred Lyall was then Foreign Secretary in India, and a contemporary of White's, both having been born in the same year, 1835. It has fallen to me to write the lives of both men, who were strikingly different in their characters and careers. At this time, 1879, Lyall was by far the more distinguished of the two. An exceptionally talented man, with much literary ability, both in prose and in verse, he had, after making his mark as a colleger at Eton, risen rapidly through the several grades of the Indian Civil Service. Though only forty-four years of age, he had for some time administered a province as large as a minor European kingdom, had been the chief diplomatic representative of the paramount power among the great Native States of Rajputana, and was now the responsible adviser of the Indian Government in the conduct of its foreign affairs during a crisis of special importance. White, who had been in India a year longer than Lyall, was still a simple major of British

Infantry, with no war service. Even in that last respect Lyall had the advantage of White, for he had seen some rough fighting in the Mutiny, and had won credit as a trooper of Volunteer Horse, while White was chafing at the ill-luck of the Inniskillings in the Punjab. And it may be added without any hesitation that intellectually Lyall was White's superior. Yet before they died, within a few months of each other, White's name was known to every one of his countrymen, while Lyall's was almost unknown except in a comparatively small social and literary circle. It is a curious example, not only of the obscurity of Indian service, but of the vast importance of war in the history of a nation, an importance which modern historians try in vain to minimise. The popular instinct, even in England, where the soldier has never enjoyed much favour, is truer than the theories of arm-chair students. And no one would have admitted White's superior claim to the honour of his countrymen more readily than Lyall, who derided those theories, and held that the soldiers' profession was "the most honourable of all." [1]

White's hope of Kashmir was dashed by his being put on a Committee, which kept him in Simla. He consoled himself to some extent by winning the billiard tournament after a very close finish with a Captain Westmoreland, a better player, "who ought

[1] I believe I am correct in saying that in the programme of the last Historical Congress, held in London two or three years ago, Naval and Military History were at first entirely omitted; and in the end were given a place with other things in some minor section.

to have won, I think"; but billiards did not make up for the loss of his mountain shooting, and White grumbled freely at the dinners and the dances.

He was not to be left long in his "horrid civilisation." On the 3rd of September the British Mission which had been sent to Afghanistan after the conclusion of peace was massacred at Kabul, and on the 5th, when the news reached Simla, the Government of India decided upon the immediate advance of a punitive force. Of the three columns which crossed the frontier in 1878, the central column under Sir Frederick Roberts was the one best placed, and best prepared, for striking a rapid blow; so it was selected for the duty. Roberts, who was on leave at Simla, left at once for Ali Khel; and White followed as soon as he could. He writes to his brother on the 7th September:—

You may imagine we are all on the move here. I leave for Ali Kheyl to-morrow at six A.M. This wretched business at Kabul is about the greatest disaster that England has had since the last Kabul one. . . .

The 92nd are in front this time, and if the Mutineers make a stand we ought to leave our mark. I am afraid, however, that they will break up. Any way it is an ugly business, and if the border tribes only join in we shall have got a really cheap scientific frontier by the time it is all over. On our side in the Khurram the carriage does not amount to half what it ought, so I anticipate having to go on with very limited kit, possibly without tents. I start to-morrow morning and don't quite know how I shall scramble through, but I hope to be in Kabul with the first lot by hook or by crook. Lord Lytton is terribly knocked down about the affair. We

hear Cavagnari and the officers and men with him made a gallant stand. . . .

I am not half the man I was when I arrived at Simla. Champagne, late hours, & want of open air have reduced me greatly.

White's next letter, of the 15th September, to his wife, is dated from Thull, a frontier post at the mouth of the Kurram valley. He had had a rough journey, and what remained was to be rougher.

Tongha[1] at six A.M. from Simla, having sent all my traps off the previous day at daylight for Kalka in charge of Edoo, who was my second servant. At Solun I met poor Lady Roberts, who had been as far as Umballa with Sir Fred., and was returning slowly and sadly to Simla. I promised her that the Ninety-twas would look after Fred and perhaps bring him back a peer. . . .

The railway did not then run beyond Jhelum, a long way from the frontier; the rest of the journey had to be done in "dak gari" and mail cart, or by marching, and there was no time to waste on marching if White was to catch his regiment before the advance. There was a rush of officers making for the front, and all the conveyances were crowded, but somehow White got to Kohat.

I was delayed till yesterday (Sunday) morning at Kohat, and then got off by changing carts with Brabazon, who was not ready to proceed. Such a cart! The wheels I knew would not last, and one of them came off, luckily near Thull.

[1] A pony curricle in which the journey to the foot of the mountains used to be made.

We managed to strap it to the axle and proceeded, walking alongside it. One of the horses in the previous stage had fallen down dead. . . . As these parts are very dangerous after dark we loaded our pistols and girt on our swords but met with no adventure. . . . There are no servants here, and I have to knock the dust off my own boots, the only cleaning they get. The people at Pindi were sick enough, but everybody at Thull is down. The 1st B.C. out of 450 men have only 40 fit for duty. The 29 N.I. are equally sickly; above 90 per cent of them have scurvy.

I have just been to the telegraph hut here. The wire has been useless for some days, as out of seven soldier signallers there was not one who could send a message. One poor 92nd man crawled to me to-day & said he would send a message for me. In fact Thull is a plague-stricken spot and must destroy any body of troops who summer in it. It is blazing hot now. I hope to get off to-morrow morning at daylight, but how I am to feed myself for three days to Ali Khel yet remains to be seen. I leave here everything for Charley to pick up, and go on on Sowars' horses with a blanket, a toothbrush, a flannel shirt, and a Bologna sausage. . . .

To Mrs White.

ALI KHEYL, 19*th Sept.* 1879.

You will recognise the old heading. It is only four days since I wrote to you from Thull on my way up. On the morning of the 16th I put my kit . . . into my saddle bags and on my horse, and thus provided rode in one day to Kurram, about 60 miles, cooking a tin of soup half-way to sustain the inner man. At Kurram I begged a shake down from an artillery officer I know, and a dinner. Off again next morning the 17th, and arrived at Ali Kheyl in the evening—lunching on the Peiwar Kotul with General Massy,[1] with whom is Hamilton, 92nd, as A.D.C.

[1] General Dunham Massy, "Redan Massy."

It was good work to get from Thull to Ali Khel in two days, over a stony waste like the Kurram valley and the mountain road beyond, where fast riding was impossible. I know what it meant, for I was joining General Roberts at the same time as a "Political Officer," and had to go over the same ground from Simla to the front. The heat on the Punjab border and in the Kurram valley was then fierce, and men and animals suffered severely. Only a man in very good condition could have done it in two days, as White did, without knocking up.

White's letter goes on :—

> We are preparing for a start for Kabul. I fancy we shall be off about this day week. Long before this reaches you you will have heard of us by telegram. I do not anticipate any resistance to our advance, and fancy we shall have an uneventful entry.
>
> The people in authority, however, take a different view of it, and say we shall be opposed. . . . I only hope we shall not be kept long in that miserable Cabul.

White's letter is not enthusiastic. Indeed he had written to his wife from Simla on the 7th :—

> I would have given anything to get the chance of going on when I was at Ali Kheyl, but I am not a bit enthusiastic now, and fear it will be hard work and very little to repay one.

This is curious, but for some reason the general opinion at that time was that the Afghans would not fight, and that the march to Kabul would be a dreary promenade with no enemy to meet at the end of it.

That such a view should have prevailed, in spite of all the experiences of our last expedition to Afghanistan, forty years before, is incomprehensible, but I can well remember that it was so. "We shall never get them to stand," were the words one heard on every side.

On the 25th September White sends his wife a pencil letter:—

I am looking down into Cabul from the highest point of the Shuturgardan pass, and am still in command, but lose it to-day I imagine, as Parker must catch us. . . .

We are pressing on with bullocks as transport animals, and have awful times with the baggage. . . . We had our native cook murdered by these scoundrels (the tribesmen?).

Hope to have done my part in avenging Cavagnari before the present moon is played out.

Kisses to the little ones and to yourself.

In truth the days of George White's ill-luck were over, and he was now at the turning-point of his career. If long years of disappointment and inaction had made him somewhat hopeless of better things, and damped his eagerness for a chance, he had yet made himself thoroughly fit in mind and body to take the chance if it came, and the soldier fire was in his heart, ready to blaze up when touched by the breath of war.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARASIA.

1879.

BEFORE describing the battle of Charasia, and the part which George White took in the defeat of the Afghan forces, it may be desirable to examine the political and military position at the time that the action was fought.

I have already spoken of the reasons for the Afghan campaign of 1878, of the course which the campaign took, and of the subsequent peace. That peace had been broken by the massacre of our Mission in the Afghan capital; and the whole of the Afghan settlement, which had seemed so satisfactory, was now overturned. Lord Lytton's Government had once more to face the problem of re-establishing British influence in Afghanistan, and finding some permanent basis for our relations with that turbulent country.

At the same time the British Government was not again formally at war with the Government of Afghanistan. The new Amir, Yahub Khan, professed to be

in no way responsible for the massacre, which he declared he had done everything in his power to prevent. He wished to be regarded as still faithful to the engagements into which he had entered, and anxious not only to restore order in his country but to punish the mutinous troops who had defied his authority and slain our people. While General Roberts was at Ali Khel a deputation of the Amir's trusted officials had arrived in the British camp to assure the British commander of his goodwill, and to deprecate the advance of the force on the ground that this could only have the effect of complicating his position. If, he argued, the British advanced at once the Afghans might be frightened into opposition, and he would find it harder to re-establish his power. This was a plausible line of argument, and not wholly wanting in a foundation of truth ; but it was evident that if the British General consented to suspend his advance, the Amir might prove unable, however good his intentions, to redeem his promises ; and in the meantime the slaughter of the British Mission would in the sight of all Asia remain unpunished.

Such a position would have been intolerable, and the Indian Government refused to hold its hand. The British General was instructed to inform the Amir that the force must advance at once, but that it would advance with the object of helping him to restore his authority and to punish those who had joined in the attack upon the British mission. In the meantime arrangements were made for securing the line of advance by the Shuturgardan Pass, and the long line of

communications between Ali Khel and India; while from the north and south alike, from the Khyber Pass and from Kandahar, troops were pushed forward in support of the main operation, the march of the central column on Kabul.

The great difficulty was transport, and apart from the high reputation gained by General Roberts in the campaign of 1878, this was the main reason why the central column had been selected for the movement on Kabul. After the campaign of 1878 the northern or Kyber force had been broken up, the southern or Kandahar force had been greatly reduced, and there was practically no transport left with either. Only the central force under General Roberts had any transport animals ready. Setting aside the fact that Kandahar was three or four times as far from Kabul as Ali Khel was, this question of transport would have decided the choice of routes in favour of the central one.

The operation which General Roberts now had to carry out was delicate and dangerous. His line of communication from Ali Khel to India was indeed secured by troops not forming part of the "Kabul Field Force," but this force itself was limited by difficulties of supply to 7500 men, of which about a third were European troops, and 22 guns. From this force he had to provide a garrison for the Shuturgardan Pass, which it was necessary to hold at all costs. With the remainder he had, after debouching from the mountains, to advance some eighty miles further, and to occupy the capital of a country full of hardy

fighting men, who might and probably would oppose him with numbers far exceeding his own. The route of advance after leaving the mountains lay down the fairly open valley of the Logar river, but this valley was bounded on both sides by hills in which the tribesmen could gather upon his flanks, and it was closed at its further end by other hills which covered the capital. Moreover, although he had some transport, he had not nearly as much as he required. Indeed he had so little that even after leaving two regiments of infantry and a mountain battery to hold the Shuturgardan, thus reducing his field force to about 6500 officers and men, he could move only a little more than half the troops at one time, sending back the animals to bring up the other half. Not only did this greatly decrease the speed of the march, but it practically meant, as General Roberts pointed out, that he had at his disposal at any one time not much more than half his force. In the event of a sudden attack by the Afghans this might have been a very serious matter. As one of the historians of the first Afghan war has pointed out, Afghanistan "merited the character given to Spain by the Fourth Henry of France: 'Invade with a large force, and you are destroyed by starvation; invade with a small one, and you are overwhelmed by a hostile people'" (Sir Henry Durand).

The little force under Roberts was composed of one brigade of cavalry and two of infantry, besides artillery and engineers. White's regiment, the 92nd Highlanders, formed part of the 1st Infantry Brigade,

which was commanded by his old Multan chief, Brigadier-General Macpherson.

Hoping to keep the Afghans in uncertainty about his purpose, and thereby to prevent a hostile rising, General Roberts delayed his own departure from Ali Khel until a sufficiency of supplies had been collected at Kushi, the first halting-place in the Logar valley. Then on the 27th September he made over the command at Ali Khel to Brigadier-General T. Gordon,[1] and set out for Kushi, where Brigadier-General Baker was already encamped with the 2nd Infantry Brigade.

If there ever had been any doubt as to the probability of opposition it was very soon set at rest, for the General and his escort had not gone far from Ali Khel when the road was found to be blocked by a body of Afghans, and some sharp fighting took place before it could be cleared. The top of the Shuturgardan Pass was reached that evening, but the very first march had been resisted, and there could be little question as to the attitude of the tribesmen in the future.

Nevertheless, on the Shuturgardan General Roberts received "the rather embarrassing information" that the Amir himself, desiring personal communication, had arrived in General Baker's camp at Kushi; and before any further advance could take place it was necessary for the British commander to hear what the Amir had to say. It was the old story. His object in coming was to delay the advance of the British force on Kabul, "in order that he might have time to restore order and punish those who had joined in the

[1] Afterwards General Sir Thomas Gordon, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

attack upon the British Mission." He professed also to be in great fear for the safety of the innocent townspeople and of his own family, which he had left behind, if it became known in Kabul that the force was advancing. General Roberts received the Amir with all honour, and listened patiently to his arguments, but declined to do what he asked, and the final preparations were pushed on with all speed. It was an unpleasant position, for the Amir was constantly receiving and sending messages; and if, as most people believed, he contemplated treachery, his presence in the British camp gave him special opportunities for obtaining information and organising resistance. But, as he had come in the guise of an ally seeking protection from his mutinous troops, the position had to be accepted, and he was allowed to remain.

On the 1st of October the whole of the Kabul Field Force was assembled in the Logar valley with foodstuff for fourteen days, and on the 2nd General Roberts marched forward with the last of the Infantry, the Cavalry Brigade being then a march in front. How hard pressed the force was in the matter of transport may be judged from the fact that to collect the stores at Kushi it had been necessary to make a part of the Cavalry soldiers march on foot and lead their horses laden with grain.

On the morning of the 2nd, just as General Roberts was leaving camp, he became aware that firing was going on to his rear, in the direction of the Shuturgardan. The tribesmen had gathered on the crest of the mountain and seized the only place from which heliographic communication with the Field Force

could be kept up. They were driven off, but it was a significant warning, and could not fail to add to the anxiety of the British commander, now fairly launched with his little body of troops on the daring enterprise before him.

The four days march down the Logar valley was hot and toilsome, but uneventful. There was some desultory firing upon the British rearguard, and there were many signs that the Afghans were gathering both in front and on the flanks; but until the force arrived at the end of the valley, within a day's march of the capital, no serious fighting occurred. Then came the crisis of the operation, and with it the chance which was to be the turning-point of George White's life.

On the 5th of October [to quote the words of Lord Roberts], one month from the receipt at Simla of the evil tidings of the fate of the British embassy, we reached the pretty little village of Charasia,[1] nestling in orchards and gardens, with a rugged range of hills towering above it about a mile away. This range descended abruptly on the right to permit the exit of the Logar river, and rose again on its other side in precipitous cliffs, forming a fine gorge[2] about halfway between our Camp and Kabul city, now only from ten to twelve miles distant.

The immediate occupation of this range was evidently desirable, for it barred the way to an advance, and if seized and held by a hostile force must prove a formidable obstacle. When General Roberts ar-

[1] Ásyá or Ásyáb means a mill; Chahár ásyá, the four mills.
[2] The Sang i navishta, or inscribed stone.

rived at Charasia, and rode out to reconnoitre the position, the range did not seem to be held, and his wish was to press on without delay; but now was realised to the full the crippling effect of his want of transport. The bulk of Macpherson's brigade was still a march behind, unable to move, and Roberts had with him only four thousand men. Clearly the first thing necessary was, if possible, to get his whole force together, and the weary transport animals were sent back to bring up the brigade, with its large convoy of stores and ammunition.

In the meantime the British commander, chafing at the delay imposed upon him, did what he could to gain information by pushing forward cavalry patrols along three roads leading to Kabul, and by collecting intelligence from other sources. The result of his inquiries was to convince him that his final advance would be strongly opposed. Behind the mountain barrier lay the city of Kabul, full of soldiery, and containing fifty thousand inhabitants, while around it were many populous villages able to turn out large numbers of fighting men, for in Afghanistan every village was a fort, and every man was armed. The Amir's manner had changed as the force neared Kabul, and had become "distant and even haughty." He had throughout been in constant communication with the city, from which mounted messengers rode in at all hours with letters for him. Now he was met at Charasia by his uncle, Nek Mahomed Khan, a General in the Afghan army, whom he kept with him some time in earnest conversation, and then sent

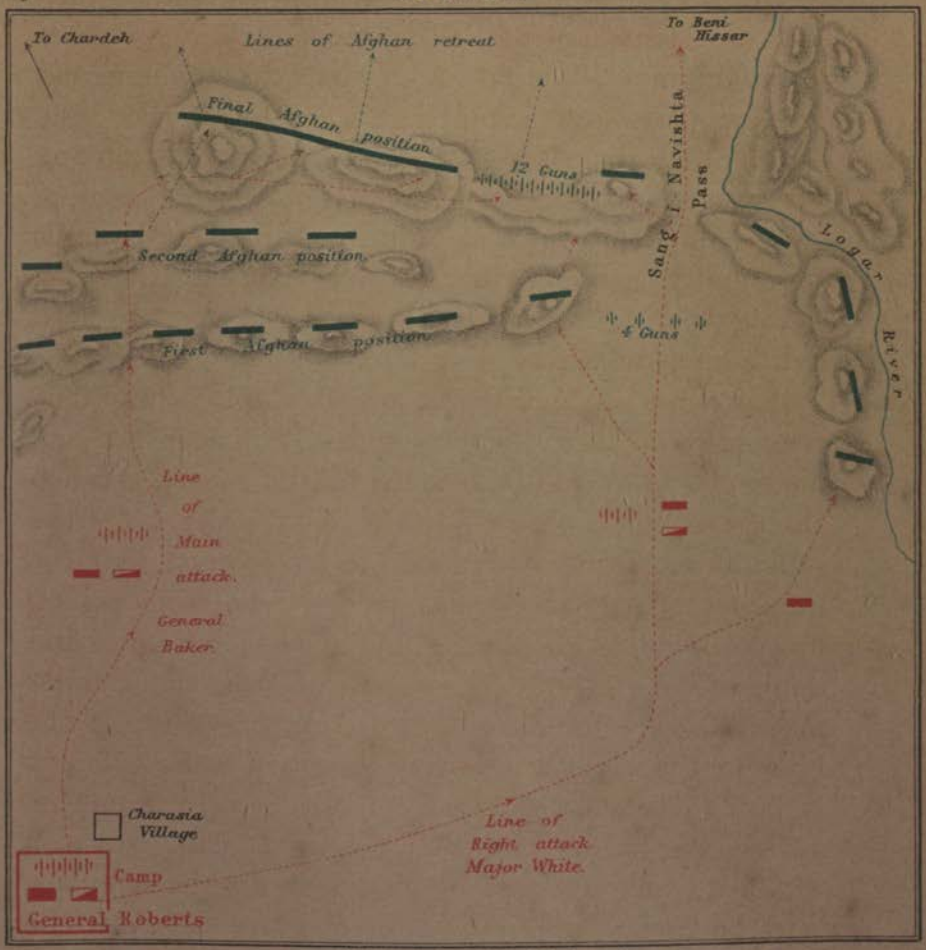
back to Kabul. All this was possibly consistent with good faith, and the Amir assured General Roberts that Nek Mahomed would keep the Afghans from offering any resistance; but a man who had escaped from the massacre of the Mission, and lain hidden in Kabul, now brought news that the soldiers and townspeople were supplying themselves from the arsenal, and that large bodies of troops were moving out towards Charasia. Finally, towards evening, groups of men appeared on the skyline of the hills all round the camp, which showed that the tribesmen were gathering. Everything seemed to point to hard fighting the next day.

It was an anxious night, and daylight brought no comfort with it. Macpherson had not come in, and his road was said to be blocked by the enemy. When there was light enough to make out the skyline of the range in our front, it was seen to be crowned by large numbers of Afghan regular troops, who were taking up positions, and placing guns with coolness and deliberation. Our cavalry patrols soon came under fire, and were forced to retire. On the crest of the hills to the right and left of the camp bodies of men began to assemble, rapidly increasing in numbers. It need hardly be said that the unavoidable division of the British force was well known to the Afghans, who had exact information about every detail of the advance. As General Roberts put it, "the position of every man and every gun with me was known."

He had now to decide which was the better course, to await Macpherson's arrival, or to attack the enemy without further delay. Either course had its dangers.

CHARASIA

Oct. 6th. 1879.



W. & A. K. Johnston, Limited, Edinburgh & London.

British
Infantry
Cavalry
Artillery

Afghans
Extended in position
Artillery

If he attacked the enemy at once he must do so with not much more than half his force; and the probability was that as soon as he was committed to an engagement in front, the opportunity would be taken by the Afghans to fall upon Macpherson's brigade, and also upon the camp at Charasia, for the defence of which some troops must be left. The British force, already divided by the want of transport into two separate bodies, would then be divided into three, and that in face of an enemy whose numbers, though unknown, would certainly be much superior. A serious mishap to any one of the three might prove fatal to the others as well. On the other hand, if the enemy were left undisturbed even for a day in the position they had taken up, it was probable that their numbers would be swelled by many thousands of fighting men from the surrounding country. The result of waiting for the rear brigade to close up would then have been to increase the disproportion in numbers while giving the enemy confidence. It was a difficult question to decide.

Fortunately for England, the command of the little force was in the hands of a man who not only had long experience in dealing with Asiatics, but was constitutionally inclined at all times to a bold initiative. He decided to face the obvious risks involved in attacking the enemy rather than to accept the greater but less patent dangers involved in delay, and the result was a complete and decisive success. After some sharp fighting the enemy in front were driven from all their positions, the range which barred the advance of the British force was seized by our

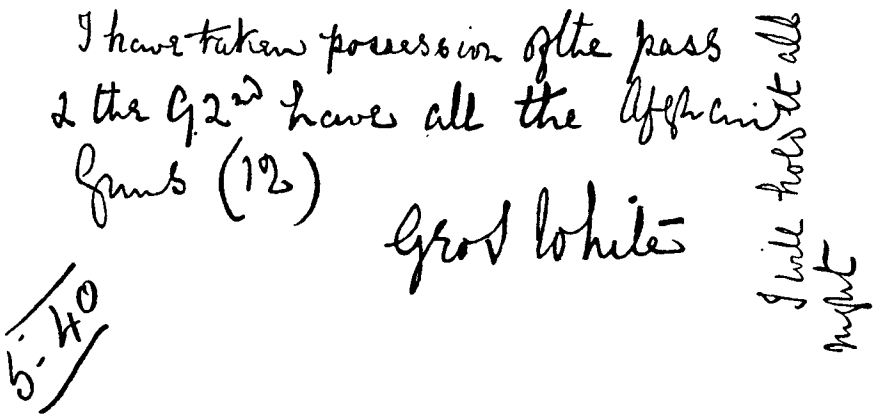
troops, and all the Afghan guns fell into their hands. Kabul lay at the mercy of the British commander. Meanwhile no serious attack was made either upon the camp at Charasia or upon Macpherson's brigade, which marched into camp just as darkness fell. The tribesmen, who had been gathering fast on all sides, scattered to their homes again for the time. Once more, as so often in the history of British warfare in the East, a daring onslaught had proved to be the safest course for a body of British troops in a difficult position.

George White's share in this notable action was a highly honourable one, and brought him much distinction. Though his regiment formed part of Macpherson's brigade, it, or a part of it, had been brought on by General Roberts to Charasia, and was in camp on the 5th October. The most direct road to Kabul lay through the gorge before mentioned, which was reported impassable; and White was sent, on the morning of the 6th October, with 284 rifles of the 92nd, to join a working party of the 23rd Pioneers, who were, if possible, to occupy the gorge and make it practicable for guns. When day broke, and the enemy were found to have seized the range of hills, it was seen that their left was holding both sides of the gorge, and that they would have to be dislodged before any work could be done on the road. But as an attack upon this point would have been very difficult and costly, General Roberts decided to make the real attack by an outflanking movement to the enemy's right, and only to feint at his left. White was therefore ordered to threaten the pass and prevent the

enemy from advancing into the Charasia village, but not to advance into the gorge until the flanking movement had been thoroughly developed, and the enemy were in full retreat. Then he was to push through the gorge a small force of cavalry which had been attached to him,[1] and pursue the retreating Afghans.

The turning movement was successfully carried out by General Baker, and the enemy's right and centre were driven back; but White found it necessary to drive some of the enemy's left from a hill in front of the gorge, and also to detach a part of his small force to strengthen Baker's attack. Then the Afghan right and centre gave way completely; and their left, assailed in flank by Baker and in front by White's small detachment, soon followed. Before sunset White had gained possession of the pass and taken twelve Afghan guns.

He reported his success to General Roberts in a few words, pencilled on a sheet of his pocket-book. The following is a facsimile of the note, except that I have omitted a postscript on a private matter.



[1] Twenty men 9th Lancers and a squadron of the 5th Punjab cavalry.

In his 'Forty-one Years in India' Lord Roberts refers in the following terms to White's share in the action:—

> At the first streak of dawn on the 7th I started, leaving Macpherson to come on with the heavy baggage as quickly as he could. I marched by the Sang-i-navishta defile, where Major White met me and explained to me his part in the victory of the previous day. From my inspection of the ground I had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that much of the success which attended the operations on this side was due to White's military instincts, and, at one supreme moment, his extreme personal gallantry. It afforded me, therefore, very great pleasure to recommend this officer for the Victoria Cross, an honour of which more than one incident in his subsequent career proved him to be well worthy.

The grant of the honour was delayed for many months, until White had begun to despair of receiving it; but there is no doubt that it had been thoroughly earned, for the courage and dash with which he led his Highlanders were marked by more than one eye-witness, and made him the idol of the men. From that time forward they trusted him implicitly, and would have followed him anywhere. His chance had come at last, and he had seized it.

Perhaps it may be as well to give his own account of the day as he gave it to his wife. He writes to her on the 15th October from Kabul:—

> The march to Charasiab was uneventful, over a generally very wild and stony desert. . . . I don't believe the least in the Scientific Frontier, and think every step we have advanced has plunged us into fresh difficulties and taken so much away from the difficulty of an advance from the

Russian side. Of course I do not refer to the necessity of an advance after Cavagnari's murder. Cela va sans dire. . . .

On the morning of the 6th October I was lying awake in bed when Douglas[1] came to my tent very early and made the following announcement: "You are to command four companies to cover a working party of the 23rd Pioneers, to parade at 7 o'clock, sir." "All right, Douglas," and up I jumped; paraded at the hour ordered, and reported myself and detachment to Colonel Currie of the 23rd Pioneers (a regiment of natives who work like sappers and miners). He ordered me to take the front and advance. As we approached the village of Charasiab, Captain Neville, an officer of irregular cavalry, with some of his men, were drawn up and halted facing the village.[2] As I went past him carelessly, with my advanced guard equally carelessly thrown out, he casually observed, "I advise you to look out going on there; the village is full of them, and I have had to retire with the loss of one horse." "Full of whom?" asked I. "The enemy," was the reply, and on we went. I asked him to report to Colonel Currie as he passed, and deployed my advance guard, and warned them to look out for resistance. I expected every minute to get some orders from Currie, but none came, and I was determined not to let the black soldiers get in front of the Gordons. At last, just as the head of my column was about to commit itself to a narrow lane in the village, with plain mud walls on each side some 12 feet high, and commanded by houses at the far end, I thought to myself "if the enemy is here I shall be exterminated"; so I galloped back to Currie and proposed another route, and a more soldierly one, which, while commanding the village, would not commit us. . . .

I made the best arrangements I could, seizing some vantage points in front, and placing my advanced guard so as to

[1] Adjutant of the 92nd, now General Sir Charles Douglas, G.C.B.

[2] I do not know why White calls the 14th Bengal Lancers "irregular cavalry," unless to an officer of a British regiment all native cavalry was irregular.

enable them to take the lead on either road. There were two roads. The one we had been advancing along lay to the left, and was known as the Chardeh road. The other to the right, known as the Bini Hissar road. By this time I had seen that the heights which curled round the plain in advance of Charasiab like a great horse-shoe were covered with the enemy, and as these hills commanded our road into Kabul, I knew we were in for a fight. I had also made out their mule guns in position over the pass, and knew that they could be no mountain raiding party, but must be the Afghan regular army in position to oppose our advance. In the meantime I heard heavy firing to my right front, and hearing that the 9th Lancers and some irregular cavalry had gone out along that road very early, I knew they must have got touch of the enemy. I once more tried to get orders or permission to support the 9th, but Currie was nowhere to be found. At last Capt. Manners Smith, a staff officer, came up and told me that he had been sent out to see what was going on, and that he believed the 92nd would be advanced. This was enough for me, and I skirmished through the orchards and outskirts of the village to the right, and soon found the cavalry under cover behind a big square enclosure, and the enemy peppering them from a very steep, high hill on the right front about 1600 yards off. This hill was covered with the enemy, who had made entrenchments down its face. Immediately in my front was a wide plain bounded on the right by the hill, and others behind it, of which I have spoken; on the left by a line of low ridges running down from higher hills above and to the left. In or about the centre of the plain—[Here I was interrupted at 1.30 by a terrific explosion, and rushing out of my tent, I saw an immense volume of smoke curling up over the Bala Hissar. "My God, they have blown up the Bala Hissar and all our troops in it," was my first exclamation, and ordering my horse, I galloped to the scene as fast as I could. I have just come back. . . .] (Next day.) I must now go back to the 6th, and tell you of the little fight. I

find I was just about to describe the position of a village in the centre of the plain. . . . After a good look at the ground with my glasses, I came to the following conclusion. Those ridges on the left (then held by the enemy's piquets) must be taken, and the folds in the ground will cover the advance of the companies afterwards. That hill on the right is the nut I have got to crack, and I shall perhaps get beaten back and lose half my men. The centre of the plain is swept by the enemy's artillery, and I'll leave it alone. In front of the large square building behind which the cavalry were hidden, about 600 yards towards the hill A,[1] I saw some strong ground, an old watercourse ending in a square enclosed by an old ruined wall, with little rooms in its corners, equally dilapidated. I had only two officers—Captain Cotton and Captain Oxley. I sent Captain Oxley with two companies to drive in the piquets on the left and occupy the ridges, but as the enemy were in force on his left, I ordered him, if unable to defend his left, to fall back on the village and hold it at all hazards. I then extended the two companies (that is, opened them out like this : : : : : : instead of marching them in close order like this ::::::) and ordered them to dash across to the cover of the watercourse and the square enclosure. As we showed in the open the fire from every rifle and jezail on the hill was directed at us, but they had no mass in particular to aim at, and no one fell. In fact, the whole of the aimed fire was directed at me, as I had a mounted orderly (lent to me by a Kabul sirdar, Hashim Khan by name, who was watching the battle and took pity on me, as I had to gallop everywhere myself, having neither adjutant nor A.D.C.), who stuck close to me, and of course we made a prominent mark crossing the bare plain. I was offered orderlies by the cavalry, but did not wish to put them into exceptional danger.

As soon as I had personally got Cotton's two companies

[1] This apparently refers to some plan which is not forthcoming.

rightly placed, I galloped off to the left and saw Oxley well placed. As I was returning towards Cotton, the point I was anxious about, a mounted N.C. officer of G/3 dashed up to me and gave me an order from General Baker, who was in charge of all the operations. These orders recognised me as having a separate command, including artillery and cavalry. They directed me to await the development of Genl. Baker's attack and to engage the enemy's artillery at 2500 yards. I thought these orders rot, so put them in my pocket. I opened fire on the hill with my rifles, but finding I could make no impression on the Afghans, who were well covered, I ceased firing, and ordered the guns G/3 to shell the height and to continue to shell the enemy as long as they safely could, as I was going at it with the Highlanders. . . . I had but 100 men, 50 in each company. However, I ordered Cotton at it, and taking the lead myself on foot, had the satisfaction of carrying it with the trifling loss of 7 men. Once, about the hottest part of our advance, I was either knocked down or fell down going up the hill, when there was a shout, "The Major's down," but I had the satisfaction of getting up again without a scratch. The men were wonderfully good, and one lad, quite a young fellow, saved my life by giving me timely warning as I was climbing a ledge to get on. I had not observed a wounded Afghan within 5 yards of me to the right. The boy shouted "Look out, sir!" and as I ducked my head the bullet just whistled by me, where I would have been but for the undignified duck! I am sure it took 30 rounds to kill that Afghan. The men were so hurried and shaky from the ascent. At another place I borrowed a soldier's rifle and cleared a nest of them out by regularly stalking the leader like an ibex. He saw me just as I had covered him, and turned to bolt, but was too late. The rest followed him, and I had not a second cartridge. It was a good sensation at the top when the men came and offered me all the spoils they had taken. I accepted a sword, and have it still.

I had written to Genl. Roberts[1] for reinforcements, and when they arrived I got further on and took a lot of guns. They never stood after the first hill, and I did not lose another man.

Congratulations flowed in freely, the first from General Roberts himself, heliographed. He also told me not to lose a chance of the pass, and availing myself of this, which overrode Baker's order, I was soon in the centre of the enemy's position, which they had nearly abandoned as Baker advanced.

I left strong posts on all the heights I had taken, and out of my pocket-book sent a despatch to General Roberts: "I hold the pass to Cabul, and the 92nd have all the Afghan guns."

I sent my artillery and cavalry back to camp in the dark, and lay out that night, very cold, in the mouth of the gorge amongst the 4 guns just captured.

Captain Oxley had worked round, sticking to the ridges, and had a very material hand in winning the battle on the left (General Baker's attack).

Next morning all the Head Quarter people rode through the gorge. Sir Fred. congratulated me most warmly, and so did all the Staff, Sir F. saying he knew what the ninety-second would do, and he was glad they had had the chance. . . .

Major Hay came out with the reinforcement, and he, Cotton, and Gordon (who also came with reinforcement) gave me great help. . . .

White's letter closes with a few words about the telegrams of congratulation he had received. What the Indian Government thought of his share in the

[1] General Roberts was in the camp with about 1000 men watching the progress of the fight, and also watching the Amir.

action was shown by a telegram from Lord Lytton to General Baker :—

Personal. Accept my warmest congratulations on your brilliant and important victory at Charasiab and the assurance of how highly I appreciate the skill and courage with which you directed it. I must also congratulate yourself and the force under your command on the very able co-operation you received from Major White, whose excellent management of the operation entrusted to him so largely contributed to the success of the day.

There are among White's papers several more letters, memoranda, and extracts from despatches regarding this action; but it seems unnecessary to go into further detail on the subject. White's personal description, and the appreciation of his services, already quoted, by Lord Roberts sufficiently explain his share in the fight. It brought him much credit, both with his brother officers and with the British public, whose attention was then fixed on Afghanistan. Also, it eventually brought him a Brevet Lieut.-Colonelcy and the most coveted of all military honours, the Victoria Cross.[1] For the future he was a marked man, and though he had still to pass through, in after years, some periods of discouragement, yet, from the moment that he decided General Baker's orders to be "rot" and put them in his pocket, his luck had turned, and he never had again much reason to complain of it.

That the orders he received were in fact proper,

[1] This was at first refused on the ground that he had only done his duty.

and in accordance with the battle plan formed by General Roberts, the extracts from 'Forty-one Years in India' given above seem to show conclusively. There is nothing, therefore, in this incident to detract from the reputation of General Baker, who carried out with complete success the work he was given to do. But no doubt in the changes and chances of battle a man must at times take upon himself the responsibility of departing from the letter of his orders, and it is the mark of a good soldier to be prompt in forward action.

In a letter to his sister of the 2nd December 1879, White writes about Charasia and his father :—

> As I lay on the field that 6th October night I thought how what had occurred that day would have delighted the old man if he could have lived to read it. This feeling has been constantly present to me ever since when I receive congratulations.

CHAPTER XV.

KABUL.

1879.

THE fight at Charasia convinced the Afghans that they could not hope to resist the British advance, and Kabul fell without another shot being fired. On the 7th October General Roberts was within two miles of it, and ascertained that its famous citadel, the Bala Hissar, had been evacuated. The following day Brigadier-General Massy with the Cavalry Brigade swept round the city to the northward, and occupied the Afghan cantonment of Sherpur, which he found deserted, with seventy-five abandoned guns within its walls. The relics of the regular force beaten at Charasia, among whom were said to be the troops which had attacked the British mission a month before, made some show of a stand; but, their hearts failing them, they slipped away during the night, leaving their camp and twelve more guns to fall into the hands of their conquerors. On the 9th the British troops were camped on the Siah Sung (Black Stone) heights a mile to the east of the Bala Hissar,

and all was quiet in the city. The rapidity with which, in spite of all difficulties, a British force had appeared before Kabul, and driven the Afghans in headlong flight from the strong position they had taken up for its defence, seemed to have completely cowed both the Amir and his people.

So far all was well, and General Roberts had accomplished a striking feat of arms. Now the time had come for punishing the guilty, and for establishing the future relations between the British Government and Afghanistan. This was a task even more difficult than the military operation.

It was in some respects complicated, though in others perhaps simplified, by the action of the Amir. That unfortunate ruler, whose spirit had been broken by years of imprisonment before his accession to the throne, and who had since then found himself incapable of controlling his turbulent people, was now in the most painful position. Either he had treacherously endeavoured to destroy the British force, and failed, or the Afghans had set his authority at defiance, and he was now dependent upon foreign bayonets for the possession of his capital.

It had been arranged that on the 12th October General Roberts should make a formal entry into the Bala Hissar, and should there read to the notables of Afghanistan a proclamation announcing the intentions of the British Government with regard to the punishment of the city. The Amir was to be present. When it came to the point Yakub Khan could not face the humiliation which his own bad faith or weak-

ness had brought upon him. Early on the morning of the 12th he walked up from his camp at the foot of the Siah Sung heights to the British General's tent, and tendered his abdication. This he steadily refused to withdraw, and when the ceremony at the Bala Hissar was carried out he was absent.

A provisional Government was then set up for the administration of the country, and two tribunals were established, the one to inquire into all the circumstances which had led to the attack on the British mission, the other to try the individuals accused of actual participation in the massacre. In the meantime it had become evident that there must be considerable delay in the withdrawal of the troops, and arrangements were set in hand for housing them during the severe Afghan winter.

Much interest was now aroused by the great explosion which took place in the Bala Hissar on the 16th October, and interrupted in so dramatic a manner White's description of the battle of Charasia. It may be well to return to his letter. He writes:—

Here I was interrupted at 1.30 by a terrific explosion, and rushing out of my tent I saw an immense volume of smoke curling up over the Bala Hissar. "My God, they have blown up the Bala Hissar and all our troops in it," was my first exclamation, and ordering my horse I galloped to the scene as fast as I could. I have just come back after seeing nearly the whole garrison safe outside the citadel, but begrimed with powder and dust. I believe only three or four of the Goorkhas have been blown up and one European soldier belonging to the 67th. Captain Shafto of the Royal Artillery,

it is feared, has been (blown ?) up, but as there is no certain news yet I hope I may be able to contradict the report before this evening. I feel certain it was a deliberate attempt by some devil of an Afghan to blow up the Bala Hissar and all in it. The first report made such a row it must have been caused by gunpowder confined in some small space. If poor Shafto is killed I had a narrow escape, as I was to have gone with him to see the captured munitions of war. . . . I was, however, late and he started without me. We are camped on some rising ground about three-quarters of a mile from the Bala Hissar and have a full view of the fire now raging there. It is said the big magazine has not yet blown up, and that if the fire reaches it it will knock down the whole city. I fancy our life in Cabul will be enlivened by constant incidents of this kind. 9 P.M.—I took too favourable a view of affairs; poor Shafto has gone hence and with him some 15 of the 5th Goorkhas, including the Subadar major, 3 Pay havildars, one Naik, and 10 Sepoys. Shafto's revolver was hurled into the middle of the 67th, and nothing has been heard of him. The revolver was all broken from the force of the explosion.

The dust and darkness which followed the first explosion are described by the 67th, who were encamped in the King's garden inside the Bala Hissar but much lower down, as horrible. The big magazine is said not to have blown up yet. So the Bala Hissar is deserted, and the 67th and the 5th Goorkhas have come to our camp, leaving their camps and all their kits standing. There is great danger of their being looted in the night, as the Afghans are just the fellows who would trust to Kismet not to be blown up. Sir Frederick Roberts, however, has warned the townspeople that if the camps are looted he will knock the city about their ears. I think the general idea is that the blow-up was an accident, but I believe it to have been Afghan devilry (if there is such a word). Perhaps we shall never know whether it was accident or the work of a slow match. Poor little Shafto was a great friend of mine, and I can scarcely imagine what pre-

vented my going with him to-day. I suppose I am reserved for another and perhaps a worse fate. How more men were not killed is a miracle. As I was coming back from reconnoitring the effect of the first explosion I reported to the Adjutant-General that I thought the troops were being kept too near the Bala Hissar. Sir Frederick sent down an order that they were to be removed much further back. At four o'clock a second terrific explosion took place, and out of the few Kahars and people who were standing about six or seven were killed and a lot injured. This was the place I had been the means of having the *massed* troops retired from. As I now write the fire appears to be getting lower, so I hope the big magazine may yet be saved. We have, however, lost 100,000 rounds of Snider ammunition which we had found here in the Amir's magazine. The British flag which had waved over the gateway was blown down by the explosion. Good-night. I wonder if we shall be knocked out of bed by the big magazine going off before morning. One thing I know, I won't sleep less soundly until the affair comes off.

17th.

I was awoke once by big explosion, but was too sleepy to look at my watch and was soon off again. I got up at daylight, and ordering my Belooch mare, a beauty, I galloped into Bala Hissar. . . . I found I was first man in and inspected the camp of 67th first, which I expected to find looted. It had not been touched, however, by human hand, but was almost buried in dust and dirt; burning embers thrown out from the crater made by the explosion had set a few tents on fire, and some of the men's kits were destroyed in the same way. The ground was strewn with percussion caps and accoutrements which must have been put over the powder, which makes me think the powder was in some subterranean room or cellar and was blown up by design. There were more than 1,000,000 caps. The Afghans can turn out breech-loading ammunition, and the folly of our policy in presenting Sher Ali with Sniders becomes more and more

apparent every day. He not only stored the Sniders we gave him to use against us, but his workmen have turned out imitations of them good enough to kill a lot of us. I forced my way through the fire to see if the big magazine had gone off, and found the doors of the huts, where hundreds of tons of gunpowder were stored in big jars like Ali Baba's jars, blown in and the powder exposed without even a cloth over the mouths of the jars.

You may be sure I did not stay very long, as the explosions were going on all round, and a spark would have set the whole thing off. Coming back I reported to the General what the state of affairs really was, and just as I had finished my report up went a cloud of earth and ashes just where I had been a short time before. You will find some of the powder which was in the jars in the envelope in this letter, as I carried it off as a trophy. I find 800,000 rounds of small arm ammunition were taken possession of by us, nearly all made in Cabul after our pattern. Not 100,000 as I before told you. The poor 67th Regiment, who were all night without their tents or kits or food, were entertained half by us and half by the 72nd last night.

According to White's account of this incident, it might have had very serious results, both for himself and for the force; and in bringing the danger to the notice of General Roberts, he did useful service. His description of the explosion is accurate, as I can well remember. While he was writing his letter to his wife, I was making a sketch of the Bala Hissar from our camp on the Siah Sang; and as I was putting in the eastern side of the citadel wall the explosion occurred, and a large part of the wall was blown out under my eyes. The "immense volume of smoke curling up over the Bala Hissar,"

of which White writes, was so striking that I brought it into the sketch, which I have now. And when I went up to the citadel, it was exactly as White described it. I remember that the very simile he uses occurred to me. The tall earthen jars full of powder leaning against each other in the magazines suggested the pictures one had seen of the Forty Thieves. They seemed to have escaped by a miracle, for some of the doors were gone, others pitted with fire marks, and the great central courtyard round which the magazines were built was covered with smouldering *débris*, among which Snider cartridges were constantly exploding, almost without report, the bullets jumping an inch or two only. Eventually, much of the powder was drowned in the moat, and the safety of the city secured; but as it was, some of the beams and stones hurled into the air had fallen hundreds of yards away, and if all the magazines had gone together the damage done would have been great.

White's letter goes on to describe the night escape of the Afghan troops, for which he thought Generals Baker and Massy were much to blame :—

> We walked back to camp in the afternoon with our tails between our legs, having allowed the people we were most anxious of all to get hold of, Cavagnari's murderers, escape.

But the desire for vengeance was then so strong in the force that perhaps the action of the two generals in letting the enemy slip through their fingers was criticised more severely than it deserved to be.

White's feelings on the subject led him to criticise also the leniency shown by the Indian Government in the work of punishment:—

> An army sent to avenge the second Ambassador of ours murdered in Cabul ought to have razed it to the ground instead of sprinkling rose water about as we are doing.

General Roberts was afterwards accused in England of having treated the Afghans with excessive severity. Certainly this was not the opinion of the men he commanded.

White's letter contains a passage which shows that, thorough soldier as he was, he did not always look with favour upon military ceremonial:—

> Poor little Shafto was buried to-day with all the bathos and travesty of a military funeral. His empty boots stuck backwards in the stirrups on his led charger, and his solah topee on the coffin, as if they were afraid of the corse getting a sunstroke.
>
> The grand dead march and beautiful funeral service to be mocked by the unmeaning three rounds of blank cartridge, & the party immediately after marched off in quick time from the grave side, band playing Yankee Doodle, or some equally appropriate air.

He goes on as follows:—

> 18*th*, 9 P.M.
>
> I am sitting in my tent wrapped up in my great big Ulster coat, and am cold, cold thro' it all. It will be hard work keeping warm in another month or so. I have been this afternoon through the new Cantonment of Shirpur, which Shere Ali had built for his army. The fortified lines are of great extent, 1½ miles long at least. I don't fancy the position much myself, in a military point of view, as it is too

extended; but we must have shelter, and I fancy we cannot be accommodated elsewhere. The Bala Hissar is looked upon with suspicion since the explosion, but I wd. like to see it occupied. It commands the City thoroughly, and I have little doubt the City people will require intimidation before the winter is over.

White's views were very soon shown to be correct, but he does not notice the main reason which guided General Roberts in his decision to put the troops into Sherpur instead of the Bala Hissar.

"The dangerous proximity of the huge store of gunpowder, which could only be got rid of by degrees," was indeed one reason; but the main reason was that there was not room in the Bala Hissar for the whole force, and that therefore, if the Bala Hissar were occupied, the troops would have to be separated. General Roberts felt that the great extent of Sherpur made it a very difficult place to defend,

but [he writes] remembering the grievous results of General Elphinstone's force being scattered in 1841, I thought the advantage of being able to keep my troops together outweighed the disadvantage of having to defend so long a line.

His decision, therefore, was in favour of Sherpur, into which the force was moved before the great cold set in, and very thankful we all were to get under the shelter of brick walls and wooden huts instead of our wind-shaken tents on the Siah Sung. The Bala Hissar, in which the massacre of the

Mission had taken place, was demolished as an act of retributive justice, and to impress the people of Afghanistan with a "lasting memorial of our ability to avenge our countrymen."

How severe the cold was, even at the beginning of November, may be judged from the fact that in a mess tent used by the Headquarter Staff when Sherpur was first occupied, a tent sunk deep in the ground for warmth, and furnished with a fireplace, grapes on the table froze as hard as bullets, and the water in the bottles often became solid ice. I see that White, in his letter of the 18th October, asks his wife to send him "a pair of common screw-heel skates." Many of us had managed to provide ourselves with these, and there was much skating on the moat of the Bala Hissar and elsewhere.

But there was much to be done besides skating, particularly in the matter of collecting supplies for the winter; and while doing so, our troops occasionally had some sharp fighting with bodies of tribesmen. The direct route from India by the Khyber Pass had also to be opened up, and this gave much occupation to the troops.

Towards the end of November rumours of a hostile gathering to the south-west, under a famous old mulla or priest, caused General Roberts to send out a force under General Baker, with orders to attack and disperse the tribesmen. The 92nd formed part of the force, and White went in command of the regiment, his senior, Colonel Parker, being otherwise employed. On the 23rd White writes to his

wife from Maidan, about five-and-twenty miles from Kabul :—

Here we are so far on our way, but I doubt if we shall be able to catch that mullah. . . . We are the only white troops, except a few artillery and a squadron of 9th Lancers. Whether we are likely to have any soldier's work to do is not yet known. There is an old mullah, held in great repute, somewhere between this and Ghazni, who has collected a following, who are said by some to be ready to fight us. He must be a hardy old man if he can turn out to fight this weather. . . . Whether we have fighting or not, it is no feather-bed soldiering. I had a go of fever and ague yesterday, and when I awoke this morning my moustache was an icicle. I had some tea left at my bedside at about 7 last evening. I was then too languid to drink it, but tried to do so about 9, when I found it a mass of solid ice. Mr Ramsay told me that the rum in his flask was frozen this morning. All these cases are inside tents.[1] I think the thermometer must go down to zero every night, but with the few pounds of baggage we can carry there are none to throw away on thermometers. . . . I am quite right to-day and full of quinine. Charley is a mother to me. I have clothed him well, but the servants have no tents. He has two Poshteens,[2] big ones, and a pair of posteen boots. His cough is better, I think. There is a wind blowing to-day that comes straight through the thin canvass of the tent. I hope it will drop before night. The days are bright and cheery & the sun is delightful, but even at 1? o'clock a mussak[3] in the shade of a tent freezes.

6.30 P.M.

On service things change their aspect rapidly. The Cavalry have found the enemy in position, and we move

[1] Lord Roberts writes of this time, 'Forty-one Years in India': "So intense was the cold that the ink froze in my pen, and I was obliged to keep my inkstand under my pillow at night."

[2] Sheepskin coats.

[3] Water-skin.

out to fight them to-morrow morning at daylight. Oh how cold it will be getting up at six. I wonder what I shall be able to add to this *to-morrow* night. Good news, I hope.

25*th*.

All very well talking or writing about *to-morrow* night, but yesterday—the to-morrow of the 23rd—I was so frozen when I came in, I wrapped myself in my poshteen and lay down. We were up at 6, struck our camp, packed it in three forts, and marched off to punish the offenders. Said offenders had fired at the 9th Lancers and killed two of their horses. After a weary trudge of eight or nine miles we found the forts, where the enemy had been the night before, deserted, & we experienced no resistance. . . . I was disappointed at not having a fight. The enemy had been described as desperadoes who would fight at all hazards. As I was in command of the regiment, the only white one, I should have come in for any kudos going. . . . General Roberts, who came out as a spectator yesterday, went back to Sherepur this morning. The little man was very much disgusted at not having a fight yesterday. He said to me in very mournful tones as he passed the regiment, "There is no fight in these fellows, White"—a remark that made the men within hearing grin. . . .

I see Vanity Fair has honoured me with mention. Ali Baba says there is a strong smell of whisky in the 92nd camp, but that Major W. declares it is Apollinaris Water. I wish to God it was either—whisky for choice; but the latter would be a great improvement on the half-frozen mud which is our real beverage.

The whole force was in fact without strong drink of any kind, even a ration of rum, except in the hospitals, and it may be doubted whether the troops were the worse for it, especially as the fruit and vegetables were magnificent. Perhaps these were too

plentiful, for many of the men ate more than was good for them, and suffered accordingly.

It has already been mentioned that White looked upon the Forward Policy in Central Asia as a mistake. It was characteristic of him that in spite of his own forward spirit, and the known views of his chief, General Roberts, whom he regarded with unbounded admiration, as capable of "making rings round" any frontier soldier in India, White nevertheless adhered to this conclusion.

I am still firmly of opinion [he writes to his brother] that our strongest position was the one we had a couple of years ago, & that scientific frontiers are simply running our heads into dangers without anything to compensate. The hill tribes are and always will be a power in their own hills, but once on the plains of India they would disappear before a squadron of Lancers well led.

Roberts says we cannot afford to sit still on account of our Native States and soldiery in India. I cannot see how you can remove these dangers by having the troops to whom we would naturally look to quell outbreaks in Hindustan locked up in the passes of Afghanistan, where a reverse would mean annihilation. Russian intrigue is the bugbear. Will Russian intrigue cease when she is North Bank of the Oxus and we are the South? Far from it, the exciting cause being ever present there will be no end to the intrigue.

As to the merits of the question there was doubtless much to be said on both sides, but it is interesting to see how White thought it out for himself. There were not many men in the force who shared his views.

White had marched his regiment into Sherpur

again on the 1st December, depressed at the apparent reluctance of the Afghans to come to blows. "We never got within a mile of the enemy," he wrote, and like many others in the British force who were longing to punish them for the massacre of the Mission, he began to fear that they would never again be got to stand. But in truth the Afghan is a born soldier, and our people were to have their fill of fighting before many weeks had passed. On the day that White marched in, despondent and ill from the effects of exposure to the cold, the Amir Yahub Khan started for India, where the British Government had decided to let him live for the future. The news of his deportation spread rapidly through the country, and the Afghans, who had been more surprised than cowed by the swift seizure of Kabul, rose on all sides against the hated infidels. Their mullas urged them on by fiery appeals to their fanaticism and pride, by reminding them how their fathers had destroyed a British force in the former war, and by pointing to the small numbers of the force which was now occupying their capital. Early in December it became known that hostile gatherings were forming in various directions, and that the design was to concentrate on Kabul, to seize the city, and to surround the Sherpur cantonments with overwhelming numbers.

In these circumstances General Roberts decided to send for reinforcements, and in the meantime to strike out at the different sections of the advancing enemy, hoping to beat them in detail before they could concentrate. On the 8th of December General

Macpherson marched out of Sherpur with a small force of all arms, and on the following day General Baker also moved out. It seems unnecessary to describe here in detail the operations which ensued. They have been fully described by Lord Roberts himself in his book, 'Forty-one Years in India.' It will suffice to say that one body of the enemy was beaten and dispersed by Macpherson on the 10th of December, but that on the following day a detachment of cavalry and horse artillery was roughly handled by another Afghan force, which also seized some heights overlooking Kabul from the south. These heights were attacked on the 13th and brilliantly captured, but on the 14th it was seen that the enemy was being reinforced by vast numbers of fighting men from various directions, and had occupied the Asmai heights to the north-west of the city. These heights also were attacked and taken; but the enemy still continued to gather, "large masses steadily advancing from north, south, and west"; one of the heights was retaken by them; and soon after midday General Roberts was obliged to recognise that the odds against his little force were overwhelming, "that we were overmatched, and that we could not hold our ground." That afternoon Macpherson and Baker were withdrawn from their forward positions, and the force was concentrated at Sherpur. It was a most difficult operation in face of a swarming enemy, and the precision and steadiness with which it was carried out were beautiful to see. But before night the city and Bala Hissar were in the hands of the Afghans. The result of the five

days' fighting had been that though the British force had struck some heavy blows and inflicted severe loss, it was now for the time compelled to give up the hope of beating the Afghans in the field, and to act entirely on the defensive. The troops were in no way disheartened by this change in the situation, but it was for all concerned a galling surprise.

It need hardly be said that during these eventful days the 92nd had been well to the front, and that White had found fresh opportunities of showing his capacity as a forward soldier. He had not anticipated that this would be the case. On the 8th of December he writes to his wife:—

I cannot tell you of much variety in this part of the world, but we are off again to-morrow in pursuit of that illusion, the enemy. . . . General Macpherson takes out a force to-day, and General Baker follows to-morrow with another lot, of which we (92nd) are to form part. . . . Parker is going out to-morrow in command of the regiment, so I shall be second fiddle this time. Cold and discomfort, and perhaps no work to compensate. But the more meets you go to the more chance of a run at last.

He was to have a run this time, and a good one. Even before his letter was despatched news had come which seemed to show that the enemy was not to be an illusion, for on the morning of the 9th he adds a postscript:—

Just heard that the enemy are really coming on this time in great force. Hope I may have another go in at them. We ought to meet them in 24 hours from this.

His next letter is dated nine days later, after the fighting in the open was over, and the force had been retired into Sherpur. It is long, but it gives so graphic a description of the whole affair, and shows so well the spirit animating the beleaguered troops, that I quote it in full.

Many happy Christmases to you and the little ones. I hope you are as jolly as I am. I was getting bored with the situation here some time ago, but we are having rare times of it now & consequently I am in the highest health. All fever and ague gone, altho' last night was the first of four nights that I have had a bed to sleep on, the previous three having been passed on the frost-bound ground with nothing but my blanket.

I think my last letter to you must have been written about the 7th or 8th, so, to begin at the beginning, I will take up the story of my adventures from the latter date. Did I tell you in my last of a very narrow escape a Mr Adie of the Commissariat Department had on the evening of the 7th? As I was taking a walk with Brabazon we met General Hugh Gough and young Pole-Carew,[1] a guardsman now on the staff of General Roberts. We stopped to have a crack—as they say in the North of Ireland—and young Adie rode up on a handsome Arab which, I afterwards learnt, he had paid 1200 rupees for. He pulled up, and as his horse was fidgetty he had to wheel him round more than once. In one of these caracols the horse's hind legs suddenly went through a crust that covered one of a system of wells called "Kariz," by which the Afghans conduct water for irrigating purposes. The rest of our party appeared to think that it was a hole and that he would soon be out, but I knew the style of lodging he had got into. . . . I rushed forward, followed by Brab, and secured Adie under the arms; by this time the poor horse

[1] Now Major-General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, K.C.B., M.P.

was holding on with his forelegs on the surface, but the hind quarters quite sunk down the well. As Adie quietly sat on his horse giving orders I thought he was jammed in, but it turned out that he was quite clear & we dragged him off just as the horse, making another plunge, sank many feet down the well. I never saw a man, in such imminent danger, take a thing so coolly as Adie did. He was quite angry with me for seizing him so roughly, and sat in his saddle, the horse been (being?) nearly vertical, like the pictures of heroes on horses straight up and down, enlarging upon the impropriety of having such places about. The horse was soon buried for ever.[1]

On the 8th there was a grand Review parade for Sir Michael Kennedy, who has come up here to see after the transport. I was Field officer of the day and was left in charge of the Cantonment. Our stores of boussa[2] are highly inflammable, and, as our existence here during the winter depends upon our stores, it is very necessary to guard against any attempt by an adventurous Afghan at incendiarism; one lighted match would do it. Genl. Roberts sent for me and entrusted me with the keeping of the place while the troops were out. . . . All went off well, and I was told the marching past of the 92nd was superb.[3]

[1] This method of irrigation is usual in various parts of Central Asia. In Persia the Kariz is called a Kenat. It is a rough tunnel, at times several miles in length, by which water is brought down from the flanks of a range of hills to the point where it is wanted. To keep the tunnel straight, and allow of cleaning out, air-shafts are sunk at intervals of twenty or thirty yards. Near the head of the Kenat these shafts are very deep—sometimes as much as 300 feet. Men go down them with the help of a rough windlass and rope, and keep the tunnel clear of silt and weed. The water supply of Teheran is from Kenats, and the heaps of earth about the air-shafts make the country look as if dotted with lines of flat-topped molehills. It makes riding dangerous at times, particularly in snow.

[2] Chopped straw fodder.

[3] It was, but I remember when riding over the gap in the Bemaru Hills to the open plain behind, thinking how minute the force looked drawn up in close order in the centre. It must have looked so to the Afghans.

We have long heard of numbers of Afghans collecting in different directions, and later information led General Roberts to suppose that there would a junction of forces somewhere on the Cabul-Ghazni road. The numbers were variously estimated. Roberts' only anxiety seems to have been to get them all within striking distance and then to bar their retreat and commence the slaughter.

On the afternoon of the 8th General Macpherson with his brigade, or rather with part of it—as we belong to it and did not go,—was sent out towards the Ghazni Road, but to one flank of it, the Northern. This was a blind, as he made a feint of marching in a direction we had no intention of really taking. Next day, the 9th, General Baker was sent out with another brigade consisting of a mule battery, 5th Punjab Cavalry, 92nd Highlanders, 500 strong, 5th Punjab Infantry about the same strength. The intention was to march to Charasiab and the Logar valley road, then, making a wide sweep across the hills to the right, come in on the Ghazni road behind the enemy, who were, in the meantime, to be played with by Macpherson.

Baker's brigade marched early on the 9th over my old battle ground of the 6th October, and camped on the old ground at Charasiab. Next morning at daylight we started for a most arduous march across a regular steppe, barren and waterless; the men were very much done, over 20 falling out, & having to be helped or carried in. During this march I was greatly struck by the absence of human beings or animals laden along the whole route. The tops of the hills had small pickets of look-out men who fled at our approach. Parker was commanding the regiment, so I had little to do. The main body completed the march, which wound up with the passage of a very bad defile, just as night set in. The Baggage Guard was in the defile all night and had to fight, but were not vigorously opposed. We had, however, made our flank march and were astride of the Ghazni road & in rear of the enemy from that direction.

There was scarcely a man in any of the villages in the usually populous valley in which we had arrived, that of Maidan, where you may remember we had been camped for some time before under Baker, from 22nd Nov. to 30th. The few men visible were armed & on the top of the hills & fired at us. The women and children were left in the villages, as they did not expect us that way, or, perhaps, as they now know that we would not touch them.

11th. General Baker, who was very anxious to get on and join in the fight expected in front, called up commanding officers and me before the baggage guard had arrived, unfolded his plans for the advance, put Parker in charge of the baggage, with the 5th P. Infantry as his rear-guard, & told off the bulk of the 92nd as an advanced guard under my command. From the time I marched off the advanced guard we were fired at from the hills, and it was very evident that the whole country was in arms against us. On arrival at Maidan village we found the remains and bloody shirt of an Afghan Sirdar, brother of Shere Ali, whom we had put in charge of the district when out with General Baker. The force (Afghan) advancing on Cabul had murdered him as our nominee.

We set the village on fire and advanced, our rear-guard and baggage being under fire the whole way. The Cavalry, who were in front, were stopped at a narrow pass close to Argandi by a heavy fire from the hills on each side & had to halt. General Baker was far away in the rear, & as it was getting dark I knew we could not get through the pass that night to Camp; the officer commanding the Cavalry thought we had better let them alone, but I felt sure that the enemy would think we had been afraid to pass them & that next morning the hills would swarm with them, when it might not be so easy to get them off. I accordingly divided my handful of men into two parties, attacking and carrying the hills just before dark; I led the left attack, which was the most difficult, myself, and left a picket under Mr Bayly to hold it all

night. General Baker, who had been told by the officer commanding the Cavalry that the way was barred, was no little relieved and delighted to find that the hills had not only been carried but garrisoned, and was very grateful to me. I thought it a fine opportunity to improve, and having heard of the masses on our front, between us and Kabul, I asked if he would confide the advanced guard to me next day; the answer was "That I will, White." The night passed off quietly; we killed a few Afghans who tried to pass our Camp, little dreaming, I suspect, that the Kafirs were camped across the road.

On the morning of the 12th we were started early to march into Kabul. The general situation was the same as previous days, every hill was crowned with parties of the enemy and standards waved from every peak. We soon got into heliographic communication with General Roberts, and were ordered to advance on Damozan,[1] a village close to where the enemy slipped away from us on the 8th October last. It began to eke out that we had made a most wearisome march of four days duration to catch an enemy who was knocking at our hall door, & who, having tricked Roberts into dividing his force, had advanced against Kabul with from forty to sixty thousand men. We also heard that on the previous day the 9th Lancers had lost their Colonel and other officers, and poor Butson, who was acting as A.D.C. to General Baker, said to me, speaking of one of the 9th officers who had been killed, "He was killed in my place, leading my squadron." Poor Butson was shot dead at the head of the 9th Lancers next day. Such a nice-looking gallant young soldier. He was constantly with me during the 11th and 12th, and appeared to like dashing to the front to be of use to me.

As we approached Kabul we could realise the positions more. One peak, a regular crow's nest,[2] and the whole of the crest of the range behind it, were evidently held by

[1] Deh Mazang.

[2] The Takht i Shah, or Shah's throne.

thousands of the enemy, & we could see our shells falling among them. On arrival at Damozan we met General Macpherson and a lot of his brigade. A sergeant in the advanced guard said to me, nodding towards the crow's nest, "They'll want the kilts to take that place." His words came true. Macpherson's brigade had been two days and a night within 300 or 400 yards of it, but dared not go at it in front. We were ordered to march into Shirpur cantonment, and arrived at dark. Many of the men were very lame & all thoroughly done up. We only lost three or four men in the expedition.

We were not given long to rest, however. Immediately after breakfast, & an early one, on the 13th we had to turn out again under Baker, the Brigade consisting of the 92nd Highlanders, the Guides, some field battery guns, a mountain battery under our old friend Capt. Swinley . . . and the 5th Punjab Cavalry. Half of the 92nd were lame, & all the rest tired and stale. General Baker called C.O.'s and Major White to the front, and told us that General Roberts had ordered us to take the peak. The force was divided into two parts, the reserve, to remain with the guns out of fire under the command of Colonel Parker, the assaulting troops, in the front of which were to be the bulk of the 92nd Highlanders led by Major White and supported by Colonel Jenkyns and the Guides. He gave us some general directions, and I was ordered to show the way. Advancing nearly south, against the villages of Bari Hissar, out of which the enemy began to pour, evidently intending to mount the hills we had to storm, I saw a chance of intercepting them, and immediately sending back for authority to the general, changed the order of battle on my own hook, and changing front to the right sharp, seized a knoll on the spur just before the enemy could get hold of it, & cut their force in two. We had a sharp fight for it, and I lost poor Polly Forbes, who, bravely leading the leading company, with Cr. Sergt. Drummond and some few men, was most resolutely charged by a party of the enemy.

Color Sergt. Drummond was wounded, and young Forbes, like a brave soldier as he was, stood over the Sergeant and was shot and cut to ribbons. I had had to see the assaulting companies properly disposed, and was not up in front at the time, but I was near enough to see a waver in the men. Dick Cunyngham behaved splendidly, and collecting some men, annihilated the Afghans. I then fought up the spur we had gained, driving the enemy from knoll to knoll, and soon stood on the crow's nest prouder than ever of the gallant ninety-twa's. We (92nd) only lost twenty-one men, & General Baker, who was all through the Crimea and the Russo-Turkish war, told the regiment it was the finest thing he had ever seen. It was not, however, half as (fine as ?) the assault of the first hill at Charasiab, which we took with under 100 men and no supports. I got my first scratch: a stone knocked up by a bullet took the skin off my hand. Coming home from this really very fine affair I manœuvred the 92nd successfully against a body of Afghans & got them in a hole. When Baker met me he was very complimentary. General Roberts and a numerous staff came out to meet us, & we marched back to our barracks in Shirpur amidst the cheers of the garrison, especially the 9th Lancers. Parker wanted me to head the regiment, but this I refused.

It was a chivalrous act on the part of Colonel Parker, who had several times during the campaign seen his junior leading the bulk of his regiment in action, and gaining great credit, while he himself was employed in responsible but less conspicuous duties. The situation evoked a riddle which went the round of the force about this time: "Why is the 92nd like a chess problem?" "Because White always leads and wins."

A full account of the action will be found in Lord Roberts' book, 'Forty-one Years in India,' vol. ii. chap. 56.

White's letter goes on—

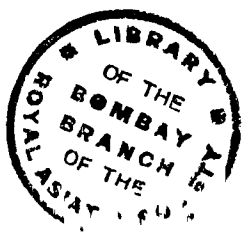
The next day (14th) another force under Baker went out to attack some other heights. Only two companies of the 92nd Highlanders went out under Capt. Gordon. The heights were at last won, but the advance seemed to me slow; the enemy, however, who were in thousands all round, attacked Baker's rear, captured two of his guns, & drove in two companies of the 72nd and a lot of Native Infantry. The whole scene then changed, & the two Brigadiers, Macpherson & Baker, were ordered to retire into Shirpur Cantonment. Macpherson was a long way out, & his retreat lay along a narrow defile, but he fought his way through with slight loss, little Mac refusing to dismount altho' the mark for thousands of the enemy, & staying with his rearguard all through the defile like a brave little man. We (92nd) were sent out to cover the retreat, and the whole affair was explained by the different officers who had taken part in it. Long faces were the order of the day, & I had no idea how depressed a lot of officers could become with so little cause. We could hold our present position against 15,000 disciplined troops, and yet there are many, even still, talking about fighting to the LAST. Out of our two companies who took part in the affair of the 14th we had none killed, but Gordon was dangerously wounded in the chest. . . . Poor Polly Forbes was buried in the afternoon, and none of us could go to his funeral as we were covering the retreat into Shirpur. I was suddenly ordered to reinforce a weak point in our works with four companies, and lay on the ground in the trenches all night; it was very cold. Firing in city, and explosions all night.

But the whole force was now together again, and though the Cantonment was too extended to be easily held by 7000 men[1] against a resolute attack, yet

[1] The Guides, who had come up a few days before from the Khyber line, raised their numbers to 7000.

the high double wall which surrounded it on two sides, with the Bemaru heights on the north, and a rapidly growing system of trenches and wire entanglements, made it fairly safe against such an enemy as the Afghans, who, though in great numbers[1] and full of courage, lacked leading and discipline, and were moreover practically without guns. Supplies and ammunition being sufficient, there was no great reason to fear that the place would fall pending the arrival of reinforcements from India, where, however, the catastrophe of 1842 had not been forgotten, and the anxiety was naturally intense.

[1] According to Lord Roberts, at least 60,000.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE SIEGE OF SHERPUR.

THE ten days which followed upon the concentration of the British force in Sherpur were full of pleasurable excitement for the force itself, but full also of anxiety for its commander. He had many weak points to guard, and there were circumstances which made the position not altogether a safe one. A considerable number of Afghan Sirdars had sought and obtained permission to take refuge within the walls, and though these men were supposed to be friendly, it was impossible to feel much confidence in them. Moreover, a portion of the garrison itself consisted of Mussulman troops, possibly open to temptation from their co-religionists outside. Some of them indeed were Afghans, and were fighting against their own countrymen. And especially at the beginning of the investment, before the system of defences had been thoroughly completed, there was always a possibility that an attack, especially a night attack, resolutely pushed home by an enemy outnumbering the defenders by ten to one, might break through

some part of the long line which our people had to hold. Especially was this to be apprehended on the northern side of the Cantonment, where the rolling line of the Bemaru hills was a poor substitute for the double wall to the west and south. On the eastern side, also, the defences were not strong.

Fortunately no sustained attack was delivered until the reinforcements from India were within reach, and when it was delivered the assailants chose the more difficult task of storming the fortified cantonment instead of attacking the smaller force in the open. Meanwhile, though there was fighting daily, and the Afghans, lying behind every piece of cover they could find, kept up a continuous dropping fire which did some little damage, the besieged force was not seriously pressed, and its losses were not heavy. On the 24th of December, after one real effort to strike home, which was beaten off without difficulty, the great gathering of tribesmen was found to have dispersed, stealing away by night over countless mountain tracks, and for the time all danger was over.

During the siege, if it can be called a siege, for the defenders were never closely shut up within their walls, the 92nd had its share of fighting and exposure, the latter by far the more trying of the two, as is generally the case in war. White's letter, written at Christmas, from which I have already quoted in the preceding chapter, goes on as follows :—

Next day (15th) there was perpetual firing all round and constant explosions, but no sign of attack. The preparations

for defence were pushed forward, & the 92nd, with the exception of a few men to man the walls and the guards, have been told off to the Reserve under General Baker. We have to be out every night, but are now allowed tents; the worst part of the work is standing under arms for an hour before daylight every morning. The cold is then most intense, and I do not think the occasion is big enough to call for a measure which is very trying to the men.

16th was cloudy, and we felt that the snow was due. . . . . I was Field officer of the day on the 17th, and consequently in charge of the defences in General Macpherson's brigade. After breakfast the enemy turned out in great numbers on the Seah Sung ridge, where we were first camped before Kabul, on the 9th October. We could see their commanders riding amongst them & encouraging them to come at us. Our artillery got to work on their masses, however, and they must have lost great numbers. The Martini-Henry rifles, too, astonished them with volleys at nearly a mile off. The attempt at attack was most feeble, in fact contemptible. At night all firing ceased. We could see them during the day carrying off their dead and wounded.

On the 18th we had another threat of attack even more feeble than that of the 17th; but the enemy, warned by former experiences, were very cautious about showing themselves. At night, just as we were moving off to join the reserve as usual, the snow commenced and we were soon in a white world. This adds greatly to the misery of pickets and parties in the trenches, but the 19th broke clear and the sun melted the snow very fast except where it lay, and still lies, in the shade of the buildings. The prospect from the top of the Bemaru heights, part of our position, is now magnificent. The Afghan hills have put on their wedding garments to celebrate the beleaguering of the Kafirs. This snow mantle greatly enhances the height of the hills and makes the prospect on all sides grand in the extreme. Scarcely a soul to be seen moving outside our position, and

the presence of man on the white surface is only evidenced by puffs of smoke from behind the walls and hillocks nearest to our works, and occasional thicker clouds from explosions in the city. For the time gunpowder is king. The general situation is not one to be proud of. We march to Kabul, make a triumphant entry into the Bala Hissar, plant the standard of England on its now historic walls — which standard, by the way, was shaken down by the big explosion —proclaim British administration in Afghanistan, disarm the city and surrounding districts, appoint a Governor of Kabul and impose a heavy fine on it, hereafter to be named and raised. Walli Mahomet & his brother are appointed Governors, the former of Balk, the latter of Maidan. The old fox Walli makes one march towards Balk about the 20th of November, but his camp is still pitched on the same ground on the 13th Dec. The brother who was at Maidan finds a bloody shroud in his own shirt; always unpopular amongst the people he became unbearable as our nominee. British administration obtains within Sherpur Cantonment & to the range of a musket outside its walls, the disarmed city is an easy prey to the spoiler from Kohistan and from Ghazni, the citizens who have identified themselves with us have been, we hear, hanged or crucified, Mahomet Jan is Governor of the city vice General Hills retired into Sherpur Cantonment, the heavy fine has been collected and taken away by the (Afghan?) soldiery and we are besieged by 40,000 Afghans and unable to go outside our entrenchments. I believed all along, and still believe, that we could move out and reconquer Kabul and every hill round it. At all events I would rather take my chance of being one in the loss of a third of our force than in the ignominious position I consider we now occupy.[1]

[1] The position held by our troops was already too large for their numbers. The loss of a third of the force in unsuccessful fighting would have meant the probable destruction of the whole. Surely Lord Roberts was right?

On the 19th the 67th put the enemy out of a village near the S.E. bastion. The attack was ill-directed and feebly executed, five men of the 67th knocked over, and poor Montanaro of Swinley's battery mortally wounded. The enemy have made tent life rather too hot; a dog was shot dead in our camp, also a pony, and a bullet went through Mr Manson's tent. I thought it advisable to move into quarters which were bullet-proof. There were twelve casualties in camp to-day from the enemy's fire.

20th. Our mess was opened and we now dine and breakfast together. The opening of the doors of our little mess hut was celebrated by the entry of an uninvited guest, a Snider bullet.

21st (Sunday). I went to John Cooke's (V.C.) funeral. A fine fellow, shot in the leg, but too proud to live a cripple, he refused to have it cut off & mortification soon finished his career. Within twenty yards of his grave, and while the burial service was being read over him, the boom of the heavy guns sounding his requiem, the Sikh soldiers were burning the body of a comrade who had died of his wounds. Another alarm of attack, but with no result except to tire our men. I forwarded a case specially recommending Dick-Cunyngham[1] for his gallant conduct on 13th. We were turned out about noon—first marched to 28th front and then countermarched to Engineers' yard. Joined the reserve as usual at 8.30. Tum-tuming and singing in the villages to the east front.

22nd. I hear this morning that the 12th B.C. went out last night to join the Latarbund force.[2] Seven or eight sowars came back having been upset or lost their horses in the river. . . .

(Xmas morning).

Many happy returns of the day to wife, bairns, and to all who may read this. If a white Xmas means a thin church-

[1] Dick-Cunyngham received the Victoria Cross for this action. He was killed at Ladysmith on the 6th January 1900.

[2] The force coming up from India.

yard, our losses ought to be small for the rest of the campaign. The snow lies about a foot deep and is still falling, but I must take up my story where I dropped it. . . .

As we took our post with the reserve on the night of the 22nd General Baker told us that the spies from the city had brought in news that we would be attacked just before daylight, that Mushk-i-Alam, their high priest, would light a beacon fire on the point of Deh-i-Afghan hill, and that all true believers were to rise up and smite the infidels on seeing the signal. I had got a chill during the day and it had settled on my liver and made me a very poor creature, so with an incredulous laugh I went to bed.

On the morning of the 23rd, about half an hour before daybreak, I was awoke by the sentry announcing a fire on Deh-i-Afghan. I jumped out of my blankets (last night, 24th, was the first night I have had my boots off since the 9th) and saw the most beautifully clear fire burning on the very point indicated by the spies. Soon the cry of "Allah, Allah" from thousands of throats told that on this, the last day of the Mohurram, the full tide of the Jehad was to be hurled against the followers of the Christian's God, and that with such fury that the forty-eight hours that had to elapse before their great festival should see not one of them left to hail the natal morn of their prophet. The, to me, musical cries of "Allah" were soon drowned in the hoarser roar of the breech-loader, the continued roll from the eastern face telling that the attack must be a real one there. You can picture to yourself a Highland officer leaning on his long straight claymore, impatient to dye its blade in the Moslem's blood, his tartans waving gracefully to the morning breeze, a look of determination on his fine face which boded no good to the follower of Islam who should cross the zone swept by that bright blade and muscular arm. Well! that wasn't *me*, that must have been some other fellow. I was wrapped in a poshteen, with a worsted nightcap on my head, very actively sick at intervals of five minutes, and wishing

to goodness that the children of Mahomet would go away and call another day. A call for support from the Eastern face, under General Hugh Gough,[1] despatched three companies of the 92nd Highlanders in that direction, and I volunteered to go with them.

Once well under fire, I began to get better, and a timely cup of tea sent by Charley—Charley is very attentive to me when I am fighting, but does the lining of my inside by deputy when the fire is hot—made me reconnoitre the enemy with a view to counter-attack. I was soon well enough to volunteer to lead my three companies where I could have made a grand coup, but altho' I had Hugh Gough's permission to act I was stopped by Colonel Jenkyns,[2] who put it so nicely I could not be very angry, "I would rather two hundred of them escaped than that a man of the 92nd Highlanders should be killed." I could not help thinking his sentiment fine in its humanity, "mais ce n'est pas la guerre." I had been watching the fight very closely, and the enemy had come to a standstill. Carried away by their enthusiasm, they had, in the darkness, rushed in immense numbers into a village within 400 yards of our position, but as the light improved and they saw what they had yet to cross, their hearts failed them. I saw the waver & begged to be allowed to execute my movement, which would have put me on the flank of their retreat, where I could have shot them down in hundreds within 300 yards and been under cover myself. Soon my words were verified, and the enemy taking the very line I had pointed out streamed out of the village in headlong flight. My three companies were the only white troops within range of the point. We poured volleys into them, but at 800 yards. Even at that distance it is a miracle to me how so many of them got away, but we afterwards counted sixty bodies in one field, & they were very plucky in carrying off some of their dead. I think,

[1] Afterwards General Sir Hugh Gough, V.C.

[2] Commanding the Guides, a well-known frontier officer.

counting killed and wounded, we must have accounted for 200 or 300, but I shall never cease to regret my lost chance. The 92nd had one man killed, White by name, and five wounded. The party with me had no casualties.

We were soon ordered back to our quarters, & two companies of the 92nd were ordered out to join an attacking party against some villages, under General Baker. I volunteered to go, but had no fighting. The villagers put their women on the walls as a sign of submission, and we quietly set fire to the villages that were likely to harbour the enemy in our neighbourhood again.[1]

In blowing up one village my dear old friend Dundas of the Engineers, who was superintending the business, was blown to atoms, & with him a younger officer, Nugent, R.E.

The Cavalry had a good day, and must have killed 200 of the enemy. They (the Cavalry) had very few casualties.[2]

We came in at sunset, and thought we might have been left in peace in our quarters for the night, but we were ordered to the reserve post and to our blankets. Next day (yesterday, 24th) news came in that the enemy had been bolting all night, and that Mahomet Jan, the Commander-in-Chief, had left at 2 A.M. I went out with General Roberts and a small party to meet General Charles Gough and his brigade, who had been ordered up to reinforce us. It was a most dismal cloudy day, & the snow fell thickly, and must have been very depressing to the half-clothed brigade who had been hurried up, but only arrived in time to hear that we had routed and scattered the enemy on the previous day. I am glad, however, that we did it unaided. We showed little enterprise, I think, but at all events we cleared our own horizon.

I have written this letter in sections, so it will give you a

[1] It will be remembered that an Afghan "village" is a fort, with a high and very thick wall, and corner towers.

[2] Lord Roberts believed that in the period between the 15th and 23rd December the enemy lost not less than 3000 killed and wounded ('Forty-one Years in India,' ii. 306).

better idea of my impressions of the moment than if it had been commenced after we had beaten the enemy. So confident were they of eating us up that the price of flour went down in the city, in anticipation of the extra supply that would be thrown upon the market from our well-stored barns. We now hear that the city has not been much looted, and that Mahomet Jan & Mushk-i-Alam maintained order and had a cordon of sentries to prevent and punish pillage. . . . Mushk-i-Alam is a very old man, between 90 & 100. He was prominent in preaching against us in '40, and is reputed to be very holy, amongst his people.

General Hugh Gough, who is a man of iron nerve, was knocked over by a spent bullet, which went through his poshteen but did not break his skin. I was with him shortly afterwards & brought him out of cover to show what I wanted to do; a bullet whistled over our heads close and I ducked low, but he never stirred a muscle. . . .

I believe there is some hope of getting a mail off to-day, so I shall be able to despatch this long story. . . . I am afraid the fighting is over for the present, & I dread the dull uneventful weeks of winter that lie before us. . . .

Please send (this letter) to J. W. . . . and request return from the last as I might like to read it again in my old age, & James Robert might like hereafter to read his father's letter from Kabul to old fogies at Whitehall.

The winter of 1879-80 was, in fact, from the point of view of a regimental officer in Sherpur, dull and uneventful. There was no more fighting in the neighbourhood of Kabul, and life in the cantonment became very monotonous. I can well remember the feeling of depression which came upon us when on the 24th, after all the excitement of the last fortnight, and the constant sound of guns and rifle fire, there was an unbroken silence, deepened by the snow. No flags

or gatherings of armed men were to be seen on the hill-tops; the great host about us had vanished into the darkness like an army of spectres; our cavalry came back from a useless pursuit, disappointed and weary, their horses' feet balled with snow, having found no trace of an enemy. The sudden reaction was trying to all; and though the first feeling gradually wore off as the days passed by, and news began to come in from the outer world, it was for the bulk of the force a dreary winter.

For the General in command, upon whose shoulders so great a responsibility had weighed, the dispersion of the Afghan gatherings was no doubt a great relief, and the months which followed were very fully occupied with arrangements for establishing some form of government in the country. But for the troops and most of their officers there was little but snow and mud and discomfort uncheered by fighting.

The following are some extracts from White's letters written during the early months of 1880:—

To John White.

SHERPUR CANTONMENT, KABUL,
3*rd Jany.* 1880.

New Year's day was kept as festively as dearth of liquor would admit. The Highlander, however, is a good purveyor in this article, & I wonder where so many of them got the liquor to get drunk on. We sat up till 12 struck, and when I went out amongst the men to wish them a happy New Year there was a regular rush made at me. I have led them in every attack except one—that of the Asmai height on the 14th, when Capt. Gordon commanded two Companies—& have taken five separate hills at their head. If profession

goes for anything there are a good few of them would follow me to hot quarters. . . .

20th January 1880.

Weather very fine but no skating. Hot sun by day & hard frost at night. The whole country was covered with snow yesterday, but the strong sun yesterday & to-day have cleared hills upon which it lay for a week after last fall. This proves that the spring is already being felt. I am most anxious to be *at* them again, & watch every indication of finer weather. . . .

To John White.

KABUL, *9th Feby.* 80.

I am really like a man in prison, our life here is most purposeless and dismal. At present we are deep in snow & slush, & the one occupation, walking, has become insupportable. Under these circumstances the Mail-day is looked forward to with a yearning that only those in like conditions can appreciate. I would rather get a dozen letters to-morrow than a dozen of champagne. By the bye we have got some champagne at last, and I intend to drink to you all at home to-night. . . .

I can't get a line as to our future policy. I am half inclined to think that Govt. will plead the deep impression made on the Afghans on the 23rd Decr. and leave the country without coaxing another fight out of them. It won't wash, however, as the Afghans don't funk us a bit, & will very probably shoot us all the way. . . .

To Miss Jane White.

KABUL, *7th March.*

Our winter is, I think, over. We have had soft warm weather with rain for the last two days, more like Irish climate than any former experience I have had in the East. The mud, however, beats Irish mud hollow. There are no regularly made roads, and when the traffic continues on a road that has

been rained on for forty-eight hours the result is only to be compared to a ploughed field in *very wet* weather in Ireland. . . . The mud was so heavy this morning that I saw a convoy of sick Sepoys & Native soldiers beaten back by it. They started early this morning, but the dooly-bearers could not get on, & they have just made the arched Gateway, over which I live, hideous with their shrill chattering as they were carrying back the poor fellows who thought they had fairly started on their journey towards their beloved Hindustan. Sick men & their bearers were a sorry sight, all wet through. We are trying to live here as best we can, hoping to have something more energetic to wake us up before the Spring is very much older. About the 15th April the Country ought to be clear enough of snow to admit of our resuming field operations in all directions. I am anxious to go to Ghazni, both because I think it is the most interesting point to make for and also as being the most likely place for a little more work. . . .

To John White.

KABUL, 13*th April* 80.

Abdul Rahman is said to be raising the country against us rapidly & to be advancing towards Kabul. We ought to make him eat a beating this time if we have any luck. He is said to have the flower of Shere Ali's army with him, & we know that they had some 5000 Snider breech-loaders in Turkestan, a judicious present we made to Shere Ali when he came to interview Lord Mayo at Umballa. If he comes on we ought to have severer fighting than anything we have hitherto had. About the time you get this the wires will probably be in full play telling you how it has turned out. . . .

Sirdar Abdurrahman did not attack the British, preferring to enter into the negotiations which eventually ended in his being appointed Amir of Kabul, but before the end of April White was again

in action. Sir Donald Stewart was coming up from Kandahar to Kabul with a British force, and some preparations having been made by the Afghans to resist him, troops were sent out from Kabul to keep the road clear. The result was another fight on or near White's old battle-ground of Charasia. It was not a very serious affair, the enemy being driven off without difficulty; but the 92nd were in it and lost a few men. White's charger was shot in the head, but he himself went through the action unhurt.

This was his last fight in Northern Afghanistan. The spring of 1880 had seen a General Election in England, and the Government of Lord Beaconsfield had fallen. The Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, fiercely attacked for his policy in Afghanistan, and unwilling to serve under a Liberal Ministry, tendered his resignation. He was succeeded by the Marquess of Ripon, and on the 6th of May White was astonished to receive a telegram from the new Viceroy offering him the Military Secretaryship. As both General Roberts and General Macpherson urged him to accept the offer, he did so, and on the 8th he left Kabul. On the 16th he arrived in Simla, where, pending Lord Ripon's arrival, Lord Lytton received him with a warm hospitality which he greatly appreciated. It was a sudden and complete change in his life—the direct result of his work in the field during the last seven months, for Lord Ripon had never met him, and selected him solely on account of his reputation as a soldier.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHITE AS MILITARY SECRETARY.

1880-1882.

THE work which White now took up was very different from anything he had been called upon to do before. Hitherto, with one short interval of staff duty in 1861, he had been a purely regimental officer. His duties as Military Secretary to the Viceroy involved no executive military work at all. But they were important, and it may be as well to describe them briefly.

The Military Secretary was, in the first place, the controlling head of the Viceroy's household. There was another personal secretary, the Private Secretary, who ranked first, and was responsible for the civil work of all kinds, including the accounts; but the Military Secretary supervised the Aides-de-Camp, of whom there were several, and was responsible for the management of all household matters. Entertainments, journeys, and ceremonials of every kind were in his province, and involved considerable organisa-

tion, mainly of detail no doubt, but of important detail. The success and popularity of a Viceroy were in no small measure dependent upon the manner in which the Military Secretary discharged this part of his duties.

Secondly, the Military Secretary, though he did no executive soldier's work, was to a large extent the channel through which the work of the Indian War Office, the "Military Department," reached the Viceroy, as also the work of the Commander-in-Chief and the Army Headquarters offices. It was not at all uncommon to find some friction, or at least difference of opinion, between Army Headquarters and the Military Department; and in that case the Viceroy, with the aid of his small Executive Council of about six members, had to decide upon the questions at issue. The Viceroy and this small council were in fact the "Government of India." Both the head of the Military Department and the Commander-in-Chief were ordinarily members of the Council, the rest of the members being civilians in charge of the Home, Finance, and other departments. It was as if in England the executive government were carried on by the King and a small Privy Council, of which the principal Secretaries of State and the Commander-in-Chief were members.

In this respect also the Viceroy's Military Secretary had important though unobtrusive work to do. He was not a responsible public official; and the public officials who had the responsibility, and also a right of direct access to the Viceroy, would have

strongly resented any overt interference on the part of the Military Secretary. But as a matter of fact the work of the public military offices was ordinarily brought before the Viceroy by his Military Secretary, who explained as a professional expert the points at issue, and helped the Viceroy to come to a decision. It is evident that in the discharge of this part of his duties the Military Secretary, if a man of capacity and decided views, had opportunities of exerting a powerful influence upon the conduct of military affairs; and in fact Colonel Colley had during Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty exerted an influence which to some of the responsible officials seemed altogether excessive.

Again, the Military Secretary had much to say in matters of patronage, especially with regard to certain local corps which, for various reasons, were directly under the orders of the Government of India, and not under the Commander-in-Chief.

It will be seen, therefore, that the duties of the Viceroy's Military Secretary were varied, and of a somewhat delicate nature, demanding considerable tact and absence of self-assertion as well as professional knowledge. Some Military Secretaries under these conditions became little more than head Aides-de-Camp, practically confining themselves to household matters; others were a real power behind the throne. All depended upon the character of the Secretary and other persons concerned—the Viceroy and the responsible public officials.

On the 25th of May 1880 White writes to his brother:—

GOVT. HOUSE, 25*th May* 80.

I have been picking up odds & ends of information here that I hope will help me when I have to take up office as Mily. Secretary . . . & I have been sincerely, I think, welcomed by the people with whom I shall have most to do. I am not very sanguine as to my success, but I shall be able to say more in two or three months. If I don't get on I can fall back on the command of the 92nd in October 81, but the Mily. Secy.'s work ought to be much more interesting. I was greatly delighted to find that Chinese Gordon[1] was to be my brother Secy. I have never met him, but he is one of the men I have always looked to as the embodiment of all that is straight & chivalrous. I have been staying with the Lyttons here; they have been most kind to me. . . . He is, I am sure, a very able little man, & I have little doubt that the mark he has left will be more acknowledged after a time than now. . . . I don't know whether you have heard that I was recommended for the Victoria Cross by both Baker & Roberts. My friends (?) at the Horse Guards sent a most snubbing refusal, saying that I had but done my duty. When I know what others have got it for, I know I have earned it more than once. I would have liked to have handed it down to J. R. W., and I can scarcely promise myself another chance of earning it. . . .

I long to get more chances in the field. I think I can score there.

On the following day, the 26th May, White left Simla for Bombay, with one of the Aides-de-Camp, Lord William Beresford, to meet his new chief. They travelled straight through, and before the end of the month White was with the Governor, Sir James Fergusson,[2] in the beautiful "Government House"

[1] General Charles Gordon, killed at Khartum in 1885.

[2] Sir James Fergusson, Bart., M.P., G.C.S.I., &c., killed in the earthquake in Jamaica, 1907.

which overlooks the sea from Malabar Point. He writes to his wife on the 2nd June:—

To Mrs White.

GOVMT. HOUSE,
BOMBAY, *2nd June.*

Of course the great topic of conversation was Lord Ripon's expected arrival, and we had not long to wait for it. The *Ancona* was signalled after lunch on the 31st, and I buttoned myself up in a very swell new tunic—fancy in June—and was the first to welcome my new master. He is a very pleasant little man, evidently anxious to be pleasing, & I hope I shall get on with him well. Colonel Gordon, better known as Gordon Pasha & as Chinese Gordon, is his Private Secretary. He is a queer fellow with a vengeance, & won't fill the post he has undertaken—quite too uncompromising. He has put me into a most awkward position already by his extraordinary bluntness. He is, however, a real fine fellow, but won't do here. . . .

I am now sure that Camperdown got me in here. I have had such a kind letter from him. I only hope Lord Ripon will consider that C. has done him a good turn.

Lord Camperdown was a friend of the family, and had in fact spoken of White to Lord Ripon.

To Mrs White.

INVERARM, SIMLA,
15th June.

So you are suffering from letters of congratulation. I like them, but when there is a great deal of other work to be done it is rather a bother answering them. Everybody says "just the berth to suit you." The fact is that most of the work does not suit me in the least. As you very well know, I hate household details, and I have a lot of little works to do, the very things I always ignore in my own establishment.

My journey has given me a shake, & I have undoubted liver to fight against. I much prefer fighting Afghans. Since I sat down to write this I have had hosts of visitors. I don't like saying "not at home," as a Military Secretary has to be all things to all men. . . . I have done my best to smooth matters between Lyttons and Ripons, & I think I have succeeded. Lord Ripon is so anxious to be kind, it is quite a pleasure working for him. I wish you were in the next room to take the visitors off my hands.

It was at this time, while White was living as a bachelor in Simla, that I first got to know him well. Before the Viceregal party left Bombay "Chinese Gordon" had discovered that the post he had accepted would not suit him. It was not in his nature to be "all things to all men," as a Private Secretary must be no less than a Military Secretary; and he felt that if he went to Simla it would be his duty to open his mind very freely to a distinguished public official whose proceedings in a certain matter he disapproved. Finding to his surprise that this was not considered desirable, he at once resigned his appointment, which he thought he could not hold without sacrificing his principles. I was at the time Under Secretary in the Indian Foreign Office, having returned from Kabul a few months earlier, and Lord Ripon asked me to undertake the work pending the arrival of Gordon's successor from England.[1] For some weeks, therefore, White and I were on Lord Ripon's staff together, and naturally

[1] Mr Henry Primrose, now the Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Primrose, K.C.B., C.S.I., I.S.O.

saw a great deal of each other. Not only had we many matters of business to talk over and arrange, but we found it convenient to take our daily exercise together on the lawn-tennis court at Inverarm, the Military Secretary's house, where we played many good sets in the beautiful Simla evenings. It was a comparatively new game to White, and he was not as good at it as he was at some other games; but he worked hard and hit hard, and was very active for his age, nearly forty-five, so that he was not easy to beat. In our work together he was everything I could have wished, always sensible and open to reason, and perfectly straight. On the 22nd June White writes to his wife :—

I had intended starting a letter to you early after the last mail left, but I have had my hands so full I have not been able to do so.

Besides, everybody in Simla has been ill with the usual Simla complaint, but with nausea added to it, which is very hindering to anything like continued work. I have not escaped, and the moment my absolutely necessary work was over I have subsided. I have never known anything so prevalent in Simla before. To begin at the top, Lord Ripon has been bad twice. He got all right again, but is again down. Last night we had a big dinner party, and he came to the post like a man altho' he was so seedy he was not fit to go through. He broke down in the middle and had to leave the table. I promptly voted myself Viceroy and took his place, having Lady Strachey on my right and Surgeon-General Crawfurd's wife on my left. Mr Durand, who as private secretary comes first of the household, proposed the Queen-Empress, and I shortly afterwards took Lady Strachey to the drawing-room, followed by the whole party.

I remember that evening very well. The complaint of which White speaks, "the Ep" as it was generally called, had devastated Simla, and from my place on the opposite side of the table, where I was feeling far from happy myself, I saw gaps all down the Viceroy's side caused by unexpected casualties. Finally Lord Ripon got up, looking very white, and left the room. It was a curious scene, and quite new to me, for "the usual Simla complaint" was harmless enough. White's letter goes on :—

We had a levée on Saturday, which went off all right, I think. I made some few mistakes, but not many, in pronouncing names. . . .

I wish people would not heap honours on me until they are really gazetted. The reports you mention in the papers got about here, and I have been, I must say, very kindly written to from all sides about my bogus Lieut.-Colonelcy and C.B.

The organisation of the Mounted Infantry Corps is rather a myth. From the commencement I knew there was no life in it, and I said so very plainly.

It may be explained that before White left Kabul to take over the Military Secretaryship there had been a scheme for the organisation of a corps of mounted infantry from the regiments in Afghanistan. The corps was to be between 700 and 800 strong, and White was to command it. He had agreed, though without much enthusiasm.

His remarks about the Levée referred to the fact that some of those attending a Levée in India are always natives of the country; and the Military Secretary who had to read out the names occasionally

found, especially if he was a British officer without much knowledge of India, that his task was not an easy one. The Indian cards handed in were often covered with small writing, and the names and titles were unfamiliar. The officer who had been reading off "Colonel Green, Captain Jones, Mr Brown" at Levée pace, 1200 an hour or so, was filled with despair when one of these puzzles was handed to him, and sometimes made a very unsuccessful "shot" at the answer. This was not surprising, perhaps, but it hurt men's feelings.

I am bound to say that White did not make many such mistakes. His long experience of India had given him some familiarity with Indian names, and had taught him that Indians attach importance to matters of ceremonial. He was careful in trying to read the names correctly, and got through his first Levée better than most men. After that he called in the aid of the Foreign Office.

To John White.

INVERARM, SIMLA, 22*nd June* 80.

I am getting used to it here, and think I may be able to do the more important work satisfactorily. Some of the business, such as keeping the A.D.C.'s up to their work, is by no means pleasant, and household matters I hate, but so far I don't think I have let anything go amiss. Of course all I write to you must be kept to yourself, but one or two of the A.D.C.'s, though nice fellows, appear to think that an A.D.C. has nothing to do. I don't like, at any time, having to pull up officers, but in an Establishment like this, where we are a small party meeting every hour, it is doubly disagreeable.

13th July 80.

I cannot say I get more in love with my berth. The constant "on duty" is very wearisome to me. I was at a dance till three this morning and long for the jungles again. . . .

Lord R. is doing very well here so far. I think him uncommonly sharp at business, and he polishes everything straight off.

Socially he is a great success. . . .

Lord Ripon was in fact doing very well. Some years later, towards the close of his Viceroyalty, he became unpopular with Europeans in India, especially with non-officials, on account of a measure which they regarded as inconsistent with their rights. But a kinder-hearted man never lived, nor one who tried more honestly to do his duty. In the despatch of his work he was thoroughly business-like—punctual to a fault, very laborious, and yet prompt. Also he was full of courage in time of trouble, and singularly loyal to men who served him.

A time of trouble was not long in coming, for on the 28th of July, before he had been two months in India, and when our difficulties in Afghanistan seemed on the point of settlement, he was suddenly informed that we had been overtaken by a grievous disaster. At Maiwand, near Kandahar, a brigade of our troops had been routed with heavy loss by the Afghan pretender Ayub Khan; and Kandahar itself, where there was a considerable British garrison, was soon afterwards invested by the enemy. The fall of this place would have been a very serious matter, and the defeat itself was bad enough. Not only had our troops

suffered severely, but the discredit to our arms was sure to have a striking effect in India, for in the whole history of our Indian wars "no such indisputable victory over British forces in the open field had been gained by an Asiatic leader." This was a formidable beginning for the rule of a new Viceroy, but Lord Ripon set an excellent example in meeting the difficulty. It was at once arranged in communication with the military authorities that the defeat should be wiped out by the destruction of Ayub Khan's army, and General Roberts, who was then in Kabul, was ordered to march on Kandahar, over 300 miles distant, with a picked force of 10,000 men.

The effect of this news upon so keen a soldier as George White may be imagined. He did not like to leave Lord Ripon in such circumstances, but he could not bear the thought of remaining at Simla while there was fighting in Afghanistan, and his regiment was likely to be in the thick of it, so he went to his chief and put the matter before him. Lord Ripon's action was characteristic. White, he afterwards wrote, "offered to resign his post on my staff, but I would not hear of his doing so, though I readily gave him leave to accompany his corps to Kandahar." White's letters show how thoroughly he appreciated Lord Ripon's unselfishness. He writes to his brother on the 3rd of August :—

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SIMLA,
3rd August 80.

I have the greatest admiration for Lord R. I think him a wonderfully good man. . . . Roberts has to-day been ordered to start to Ghazni. I think it highly probable that the 92nd

go with him, and I put my case to Lord R. He said at once, "Go. I took you because you were a good soldier, & I don't want to spoil you."

I have never met a man I like so much as Lord Ripon. He *is* a good fellow. . . .

To Lord Camperdown.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SIMLA,
4th August 80.

I may have to leave to-morrow for Kabul. I have had a hard struggle with myself what to do. The 92nd probably will move down to Ghazni under Roberts. I asked Lord Ripon, & he, like a brick, which he is, said "Go." I have wired to know if 92nd go, &, if so, I must try to reach Kabul in time—no easy matter. I hope you will not think that I have acted wrongly in leaving Lord R. now, but will realise what my position & feeling would be if 400 of the 92nd—like the 66th—were to be cut up & I a Milty. Secretary at Simla. . . .

To Mrs White.

CAMP, TWO DAYS FROM KABUL,
10*th Augst.* 80.

I wired from Peshawur that I was off to the wars again. I made Kabul on Sunday, having left Simla on Wednesday, a wonderfully quick journey. The men observed me riding into their camp, & turned out & gave me three cheers, which made up for my broken skin & aching bones. On Monday morning we were turned out at 4 A.M., & did not get into Camp till 6.30 P.M. To-day we have just camped, & it is my last chance of saying good-bye to you & the chicks. I expect bitter fighting, but it will be all over before you get this. Nothing could have been kinder than Lord Ripon. When I apologized for asking leave to resign the Mily. Secretaryship, to enable me to join my regiment in the field, he said "Go. I took you without knowing you on account of your reputation as a good soldier, & I don't want to spoil you. Come back

when your duty will allow you. I know you now, & I want *you* back" . . . and if I come through it all right, why, it will make you happier to know that I preferred to be Major White with the 92nd in their trial than Mily. Secy. to the Viceroy in ease.

Every one knows what followed, how General Roberts covered the three hundred and thirteen miles in twenty-two days, relieved Kandahar, and falling upon the Afghan leader, Ayub Khan, totally dispersed the besieging army. It was a fine feat of arms, and its value to our people in India can hardly be overestimated; for the defeat at Maiwand and the investment of Kandahar had seriously compromised our military reputation.

On the march, and in the final victory, White had fresh opportunities of doing good service, and he seized them with his usual readiness. His own account of what happened is as follows:—

To Mrs White.

KANDAHAR,
6th Septr.

We have got over our difficulties, done our work. . . . We marched from Kabul the morning after I arrived there, and we had no halt until we arrived, that day fortnight, at Khelat-i-Ghilzai, where we heard that, tho' shut up tight, the garrison of Kandahar was in no immediate danger or want. . . . But to return to our march. The way in which it was accomplished was most creditable to all concerned. The distances covered in the time is in itself a proof of the resolution of the Commander and of the fitness & endurance of his force; but if I had not myself taken part in it I would never have

given sufficient credit for the really great effort necessary to accomplish it. I, however, know from experience the fatigue & wearing effects of the short times we had to rest in Camp, & of but one regular meal a day. One day I was 15 hours on the march in charge of the baggage. I started at 3 A.M., & got into Camp at 6 P.M., the whole day under an August sun, which nearly burnt me. Many junior officers & men constantly had this experience. The heat during the day was always great, & sometimes, combined with the dust raised by 10,000 men & as many baggage animals, made the march choking work for the men. Altho' I had a horse to ride on the march, & no, or few, duties to perform, on arrival in Camp I was very tired. . . .

The followers suffered the most. As servants their work was but commencing when we got into Camp. Wood could rarely be given to them to cook their food, & when it was, they were often too tired to cook, consequently ill-fed, overworked, & sleepless, they broke down in great numbers. The rear guard hunted & carried along such of them as could be picked up by the way, but they became cunning in their endeavours to be left alone to die, and adopted the expedient of wandering up nullahs & water courses running at right angles to our route, with an Oriental's fatuous disregard for life, only anxious to avoid being forced to make the effort necessary to save themselves.

Amongst the soldiers of the force the loss was extraordinarily small. The regiments had all been long on service, and the weeds had been killed off. A strict examination had eliminated every weak man before our start from Kabul. . . .

I was quite surprised to see how the European regiments stood the heat & the march. The dear little Goorkhas stood it worst of all. Their little legs cannot take an ordinary soldier's pace, and they evidently suffer horribly from the heat, but when it comes to the fight they are little beauties, as I will describe to you further on. . . .

Towards the end of our march we used to start by moonlight at 1 A.M., and often were not in Camp till 1 P.M., & got nothing to eat till sunset. The wood had to be searched for by foraging parties & brought into Camp. In most cases we had to knock down houses & take the woodwork for firewood. The soldiers had to be fed, & no other fuel could be had. You know how I value my tea. This was not forthcoming, and, of course, arriving as I did, I had no private supply. I think I missed it more than anything, except perhaps the services of the faithful "Charley." Douglas had done his best for me & picked up a servant, but he broke down early & had to be carried on a mule, & lay down like a dead thing the moment we arrived in Camp.

Towards the end of the march we got tea again, and it brightened me up considerably. I was in low health when I left Simla, and started stale on the march, so that I felt it more than I otherwise would have done. Douglas had bought me a very fine mare that kept her condition well and carried me without a stumble thro' the weary nights & days. . . .

As we neared Kandahar we heard that our approach had induced Eyoub to give up the investment of the Kandahar garrison & take up a position on the Argamdab behind (W of) the Baba-i-Walli pass. His position was reported strong by nature, & to have been fortified by a master hand. The entrenchments which he had made round Kandahar when he invested it, & part of which poor Brooke[1] attacked, were reported, & by competent judges, your little friend Leach for one, to be first-rate & to show a high order of education on the part of those who had planned them. All their reports made us think we had a foeman worthy of our steel, and that our work was cut out for us, & would be no child's play. Sir Fredk. did not press us on so much from Khelat-i-Ghilzai, but gave the men time to recover some of their fatigue. He knew that Kandahar was safe, & wanted to have his troops

[1] Colonel Brooke, an old friend of White's, killed at Kandahar in a sortie of the garrison.

moderately fresh to go in at Eyoub's. We were all about played out, & really needed the rest & shorter marches.

On the 31st August we marched up to & under the walls of Kandahar, the 92nd leading as an advanced guard. The appearance of the place was depressing in the extreme. A few soldiers, white and black, stood on the walls; very few came out to meet us. No bands nor music & not a cheer.

We halted under the walls for a couple of hours & had some breakfast, which the garrison had provided for our officers & men, & then our brigade (1st) under General Macpherson moved off towards the enemy's position. We expected to be in action at once as Kharaz hill, which commanded the water supply for Kandahar, was said to be occupied by the enemy & we were to clear it.

We found Kharaz hill unoccupied and we also soon sighted the Baba Wali pass, which the enemy held & on which we could see his guns & some slight works. Our Brigade took but a slight part in the day's proceedings as our orders were not to push too far. . . .

We knew that Sir Fredk. meant to go at Eyoub next day, & that the 1st Brigade was to be on the right and to open the ball by the assault of a village called Gundi-Mulla-Sahibdad, the plan being to avoid the front, or Kandahar side, of the Kotal-i-Baba Wali, behind which was Eyoub's Camp & position, and to work round the South of the range which the Kotal cuts higher up, thus taking the enemy's works in reverse. We were soon at work, the 92nd Highlanders and 2nd Goorkhas leading the way, to the assault of the village of Gundi-Mulla-Sahibdad. I commanded in front, and was astonished at the pace at which the Goorkhas and Highlanders cleared the enemy out of the village, which was a strong one, but many of the Ghazis would not retire & were driven into the houses by our men & the Goorkhas. Thinking that we had two long days' fighting before us, General Roberts' estimate, I would not allow our men to dwell in the village until the last man was killed, but bustled

them through and reformed at the other side. Menzies was wounded in the assault of this village, and when taken into one of the houses to have his gunshot wound dressed a Ghazi rushed upon him & cut him with his knife across the back. Our men soon bayoneted the Ghazi. From the capture of this village to the end of the fight we never unfixed our bayonets nor gave the enemy more than a minute or two of respite. I first tried shooting them out of their positions, but the longer I tried it the more steadily they held on. I consequently adopted shock tactics & went at them with the bayonet whenever they made a stand, with the same invariable result. They would not wait for the bayonet but stalked off, leisurely enough, when we were nearing them, always separating as they went to avoid the loss which they would have sustained if in solid groups, which nervous men would undoubtedly have got into. Henry-Martini & Snyder rifles were apparently common—they have taken about 1500 from our Kandahar forces — and the good arms gave the Ghazis, who are accustomed to fight with matchlocks, great confidence. At first they seemed utterly unprepared to be bundled out, but before the end of the day the Highlanders and Goorkhas taught them the folly of dwelling too long, and they withdrew when we were further off. The 2nd Goorkhas behaved splendidly; they are, individually, the bravest men I ever saw, & enjoy fighting for fighting sake. When they got possession of the first village it was a funny sight to see the blood-thirsty little rascals sitting on the top of the houses waiting for a Ghazi, marked down into some house, to bolt. Just like a gamekeeper over a rabbit hole. One little fellow who fought all day in our ranks—we got ahead of the Goorkhas when they dwelt in the village of Sahibdad—called the attention of some of our men to a Ghazi who had halted a little in front of the enemy's line & taken cover behind a rock, & told them to look out for a tamasha. He then stalked the Ghazi, gave him a prod with his bayonet which bolted him, & shouted out to our men who

were only a few yards off to "Maro, Sahib, Maro," shoot, sahib, shoot, but he never attempted to interfere with their sport, considering that his part was played when he had flushed the game. We pressed the enemy from the time we first got engaged, & I never gave him breathing time to rally & re-establish himself. At the end of the fight we came upon his central position behind the Baba Wali pass; here we were checked for a few minutes. The enemy occupied a position in front of their Camp, a long ditch afforded a good natural entrenchment, on the enemy's left of this ditch his position was prolonged by a commanding knoll which enfiladed a ditch running up to the position. Our men taking imaginary cover in this ditch and behind some willows which really afforded none, were falling rapidly. Behind the ditch held by the enemy was a small square enclosure in which there were a considerable number of the enemy. Two of their guns were just to the left of it. I rode up & down our line once or twice & explained to the men that their position was a dangerous one, pointed out the guns, and worked them up to the proper pitch for a last charge. This they executed in fine style. About five or six men were killed crossing the open, but I had the satisfaction of seizing the guns & Eyoub's last position with the grand Gordons in about three hours from the time of starting, a task which Roberts had considered it would take two days' fighting to accomplish. In thinking only of chasing the enemy who had twice licked a British force I allowed my mare to carry me too far in advance of the men, and as an only chance I jumped her into the ditch, where I had a bad minute or two looking down their rifle barrels, but they were on the run & in a hurry to fire & be off & they missed me. This was the end of the fight; the rest of our advance was a triumphant march behind an enemy we could not overtake & at whom we had no cavalry to slip, our men tired out & perspiring through their belts. We marched on, however, through a huge deserted Camp & abandoned guns, everything denoting the rapidity

of the flight, Eyoub's own tent & a durbar tent of considerable pretension pointing out his resting place of the previous night. Everywhere collars & traces thrown off the Artillery horses showed that the gunners had used the horses to save themselves. Our Cavalry were in the wrong place and did nothing in pursuit. The body of poor young Maclean, an artillery officer of great promise who had fallen into their hands as a prisoner at Maiwand, was found with his throat cut from ear to ear lying outside the tent which he had occupied. There were several of their sick & wounded, both regulars and ghazis, fell into our hands, & it was hard to prevent our men doing unto them likewise. The incidents of the fight will no doubt be given in every paper & you will have accurate maps of its field. We had 82 men killed and wounded, of whom I am afraid about 20 are either dead or must die. The men, however, are very proud of their performance, & it was splendid. Sir Fredk. made them a speech when it was over saying that "only they could have done it & that they had even exceeded themselves." Little Macpherson, cool as a cucumber, was in front all day, and told me that it was the best fought day he had ever seen. Our officers behaved splendidly & it is a miracle that more were not hit. Besides Menzies, Stewart (Sir D.'s son) was the only one wounded. Neither of their wounds will signify.

The greatest loss of the day was the death of that model of chivalry, Colonel Brownlow of the 72nd. They (72nd) with their usual bad luck also lost Capt. Frome killed & had two other officers wounded, all I believe in one volley. Parker was very brave & always forward.

It need hardly be said that White gained much distinction and credit for his share in the fighting. The despatches of General Macpherson and General Roberts mentioned his behaviour in very warm terms, and he was once more recommended for the highest

honour a soldier can receive — the Victoria Cross. But it had twice been refused to him for Charasia by the Horse Guards, in spite of strong recommendations, and he was not sanguine about getting it for Kandahar.

Directly the fighting was over he started again to rejoin Lord Ripon, and on the 21st September he writes to his wife from Simla :—

INVERARM, SIMLA,
21*st Septr.* 80.

I stayed with your friend Sir R. Sandeman at Quetta, and halted there a day to talk over big political & military questions which Lord Ripon had asked me to enquire about. Sir R. has a nice house, and I lay in a bed & had a tub and borrowed clothes from him — rather loose about the tummy — and revelled in luxury. Got beer to drink, and only longed to be able to live with Sandy all my life, . . . but Lord Ripon had said to me when he let me go—"Come back as soon as you can; that is my only condition," and when I found myself alive & unwounded at the end of the action my first anxiety was to show him that when service would allow me I could leg it back to him as fast as I had legged it to Kabul. We made Simla in about 8 days' travelling.

Nothing could have been warmer than Lord R.'s reception of me, and I am now fonder of him than ever. Indeed, all round Simla I have been received with the greatest warmth, far greater than when I last arrived, & Pole-Carew has been telling some stories about the action of the 1st that have caused me a good deal of pleasant bother.

All this was satisfactory, but it must be added that, much as he liked Lord Ripon, White had begun to dislike his work as Military Secretary, and his state

of health was not such as to make him return with pleasure to the rather harassing duties of his post. He was not fond of continuous writing, and he detested household details—having to "enquire why the cream is sour," and so forth. Also he was coming to the conclusion that it would be a mistake to lose the chance of commanding his regiment when a vacancy occurred.

To Miss Jane White.

GOVERNMT. HOUSE, SIMLA,
5th October 80.

Yes, I have got through this time all right. I ought to have been relieved of all trouble more than once, but they shoot badly. Roberts' despatches are out, and ought to go home by the mail after this. Look out for them; they will please you.

I am very seedy, full of frontier sores—the result of bad water & over-fatigue. These sores won't heal & are horrid. I have one, a regular horn, on my forehead, another—strange to say—behind my right ear, & another on my hand—all exposed. I am very tired, so won't make this long. I have been writing for I don't know how many hours to-day, since 6.30 this morning, & it is now 11 P.M. I must be at it again at 6 to-morrow morning.

To John White.

INVERARM, SIMLA,
19th October 80.

I have put on a great many years since you saw me last. However, I have not increased the burthen of my years without having something to show for it, I hope. Roberts' despatches are out and published, and I have no doubt they will be pleasant reading to you & to all my friends. . . .

I made another bid for the V.C. for him on the 1st September, but I suppose the Horse Guards will say that I "did my duty only." I have again been warmly recommended for it by Parker, who started it, General Macpherson, Sir F. Roberts, and Sir F. Haines.[1] . . .

I have been thinking over my future, and I think I have but one course open to me, & that is to accept the Command of the 92nd Highlanders when Parker's time is up this year. I have been asking several soldiers whose judgment I rely on, & they one & all say, "You will end your career if you let the 92nd slip."

I must make up my mind when Parker leaves. If I don't accept then I am shelved so far as a Regiment goes for ever, and it is always urged against a man "He never commanded a regiment" when claims are considered for the higher Commands. . . .

Towards the end of October, the close of the Simla season, the Viceroy and his staff started as usual for a cold weather tour in camp. There was to be a great Durbar at Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, and meanwhile Lord Ripon was to have his first experience of tiger-shooting in the native State of Náhan. After the Durbar he was to go down to Bombay to receive Lady Ripon, who was coming out from England to join him, and then the Viceregal party was to work gradually round to Calcutta for the cold weather season.

It was then usual for a member of the Indian Foreign Office to accompany the Viceroy on his tours, and as Under Secretary I joined the party—seeing

[1] General Sir Frederick Haines was then Commander-in-Chief in India.

much of White. He was not well, or very happy. The march across the mountains to Náhan was pleasant enough, but the life did not suit him. He writes to his wife on the 31st October:—

> We have to carry our camp and supplies, 1700 coolies, besides ever so many mules. Changed times since we had half a mule each in Cabul. Bonsard, the French cook, is with us, and feeds us a great deal too well for the hills. . . . I cannot shake off the feeling of being constantly seedy. In fact, I am very much afraid that I shall make a poor hand of the next campaign I go on. This life does not suit me in the least. In fact, it is horribly irksome to me, never really one's own master, always suiting oneself to times and seasons, & never free from work of some sort or another.[1]

But the people who managed the shooting persuaded two tigers to come out of cover close to the "machán" or tree platform occupied by Lord Ripon, who shot both, and was as happy as a schoolboy. After the shooting party was over the Durbar at Lahore was carried out successfully, and White met his own regiment among the troops brought together to do honour to the Viceroy.

An Indian Durbar, when ruling chiefs were present, used to be carried out under the control of the Indian Foreign Office, the arrangements for the Viceroy and

[1] As an illustration of the Military Secretary's duties, I must tell a story which was current in the camp at this time. One morning, as we were starting for a day's tiger-shooting, Lord Ripon, a man of robust make, had to mount an elephant, and the strain of climbing into the howdah proved too much for his thin shikar suit. His valet, a well-known character, turned to White with the remark: "Look here, *you're* Military Secretary. Go and tell the Viceroy he's bust his bags." After that "*You're* Military Secretary" became a cant phrase among us.

Staff being concerted by the Foreign Office with the Military Secretary, who had also to deal with the officers commanding troops, so White had his hands full. It was new work to him, and in his indifferent state of health it worried him excessively. In fact, he did not seem to me to be in his element. On an Afghan hillside under fire he was as cool and ready a man as one could wish to see, handling his troops with the ease that comes of perfect confidence. Attending to details of ceremonial in a Durbar he was anxious, and even at times inclined to be irritable, though his natural courtesy and kindliness always prevented his becoming an unpleasant fellow-worker.

After the Durbar, if I remember right, we went down to Karachi, and thence by sea to Bombay. While at sea White writes to his sister on the 25th November 1880:—

INDIAN GOVT. STEAMER "TENASSERIM,"
25th Nov. 80.

I have been in such wretched health that I care very little even for the reputation I have made, but there is one chance still alive that fires my ambition. There are two applications in for me for the V.C. The first for Charasia was, as you know, refused curtly enough, with an intimation that Major White had but done his duty. This was known by those who knew anything of the circumstances to be such a misrepresentation that Sir F. Roberts sent it in again, & this re-submission was warmly backed by Sir F. Haines. No answer has yet been received to this second application. Since then I have been warmly recommended for the V.C. by Parker, General Macpherson, General Ross, Sir F. Roberts, & by Sir F. Haines, for the action, or rather for the last charge at the action, at Kandahar. If I am considered worthy of

both I shall be the only officer in the British Army who has a V.C. with a clasp to it. I have, I know, earned it on both occasions, not that it came into my mind at the time, but I get so provoked at the want of enterprise often shown in carrying out my orders it is a positive relief to me to throw myself into the thick of it. The Duke of C.'s good opinion of me was, I am sure, formed on kind letters written by my dear old brick of a Viceroy, who is never happy himself unless he is doing somebody a good turn. He has been making capital speeches everywhere during our tour, & winning everybody he meets by his geniality & anxiety not to give trouble or to put people out.

The life is irksome to me. I hate ceremonials & late hours, and I never have any time to myself. I cannot help wishing that the *Tenasserim* had her head towards Aden instead of towards Bombay, & that my Viceroy's term of office was ended.

Lady Ripon is to be at Bombay 29th or 30th; we arrive 27th & go through the same old round of levees, deputations, dinners, dances, &c. We got through the Lahore week wonderfully well; there was not a hitch anywhere. It is anxious work when the whole burden rests on one's own shoulders, as it, to a great extent, did on mine. . . .

Lady Ripon duly arrived on the 1st of December, and there were great social doings in Bombay, which White did not enjoy.

Good-bye [he writes to his wife on the 3rd December], I must dress for one of these tiresome functions.

Cased in gold from 8 till 1, with the thermometer at 84°. I would rather be sleeping in the snow at Sherpur with a poshteen round me.

White had not seen her or his daughter for two years, and his letters at this time are full of im-

patience to rejoin them. She urged him not to throw up his appointment, and White replies :—

I think Sir F. Roberts may point out to you that the command of a regiment is more a soldier's work than what I am at now.

Lady Ripon, a brave and devoted woman, with a delightfully keen sense of humour, who was of great help to her husband during the rest of his Viceroyalty, had arrived just in time to nurse him through a serious illness ; for he had fever in Bombay, and broke down completely at Allahabad on his way to Calcutta. White took upon himself to counter-order the arrangements for the Viceroy's further journey, and received a severe "wigging" for doing so, which perhaps did not increase his willingness to retain the Military Secretaryship. Lord Ripon afterwards saw that the step had been necessary, and forgave him; but his letters at this time show that he was becoming eager for his freedom. His eagerness was increased at the end of the year by the news that trouble was brewing in South Africa, and that his regiment was to go there on its way to England. He writes to his wife on the 23rd December :—

Your fine long letter written Novr. 18th gave me great pleasure, as you enter so thoroughly into our united plans. . . . Living at another person's table is cheap, but I hate it, & I feel I always shall dislike it. . . . I think you would dislike it very much also. However, I won't say more about it now.[1]

[1] White never could feel as one of his successors used to feel, and say: "The best of everything is good enough for me."

One of the things that makes me keen to give up Military Secretaryship is that I consider myself a failure. You know me well enough to feel that that feeling would in itself make me a failure. . . . Much of the work is very small work indeed, and does not suit me either. . . . The work is not difficult now; I can get through it easily in four hours or so, but it is unsatisfactory. . . . It is so good of you to volunteer to come out to me, without the children. I may ask you to do it, but it is not likely. . . . Do you see that Sir Geo. Colley has got another little war up in the Cape? It might swell to big proportions. It would take a good lot of men of our modern sort to tackle 5000 Boers. I hope Sir G. may succeed, but I think he has a dangerously high idea of what a few British soldiers can do.

White, as I have noticed before, had no belief in the young short-service soldier as compared with the soldier of the old type.

On the 30th December he writes again :—

I am decidedly better. Doctor Anderson has taken me in hand, and my boils—they were more like frontier sores—are disappearing rapidly, but I am living on quinine and iron. . . . It is nearly two years now since we parted & we must put an end to it. I am in a state of uncertainty now as to whether the 92nd may not be sent to the Cape. . . . I would be delighted, but I don't know whether the men and the other officers would.

It ought not to take long to finish the war if there were enough of troops poured into the country, & it would be a glorious finish to the Afghan campaign if we could walk over the Boers in like fashion. However, you will know all about it long before this reaches you. I suppose it is horribly selfish of me to wish to go, but I look upon it as about the shortest way home for me, and I am longing to have my family about me again. . . .

Fancy, the 92nd go through here to-morrow on their way home. I wish I was with them, but I must work out my destiny. They are going home over 800 strong—what a nice little reinforcement for Sir Geo. Colley. . . .

I think I would like this berth much better if you were with me, but I would infinitely prefer the command of a regiment. There are such difficulties about having one's own establishment as one of the household, & I think you would hate being always at other people's tables as much as I do.

A few days more and White's longings had been too much for him. The departure of the 92nd seems to have been slightly delayed, and before they passed through Allahabad White had applied for leave to go with them. He writes to his wife on the 6th January 1881 :—

VICEROY'S CAMP, ALLAHABAD,
6th January 81.

I am in a state of mind that nothing but a soldier can understand. The 92nd are passing through Allahabad to-day en route to the Cape, & I have been refused leave to go with them, being seconded. I have got the Viceroy to wire to the Duke of Cambridge to beg that I may be allowed to go, but I doubt whether it will be granted. I have put the Viceroy out asking to go away again, & have resigned the Military Secretaryship in the event of being allowed to go. . . .

I shall grin & bear it if not allowed to go, but it will be the hardest lines in the world to have been 27 years a regimental officer & cut out of a Campaign because I have been 2 months seconded. . . .

It must be admitted that Lord Ripon was wonderfully unselfish and kind about this matter, the more so in that he was very ill at the time; but the appeal

to the Duke of Cambridge failed. In my diary for this year I find the following entry:—

Poor White has lost the chance of service at the Cape. The Viceroy tried to get him sent, but the Duke refused to relax the seconding rule, and the 92nd goes without him. He is much disappointed, and the Regiment also.

So White had to make up his mind to remain where he was. Accordingly he promised the Viceroy to "settle down until the command of the regiment called him away," and the long-suffering Viceroy replied that he had always expected White to leave then. The command was to fall vacant in the following September.

But there was to be no "settling down" for White. A few weeks more brought the news that Sir George Colley had been checked, if not defeated, by the Boers at Laing's Nek; and on the 2nd February White writes again:—

If Colley cannot hold his own the troops arriving from India will have enough to do. There are not many of them, and the Boers will have great advantages over them. I would like to be with the old 92nd now. They must have landed at Durban and be preparing for their advance.

A little earlier he had written to his brother:—

I forget whether I have written to you since the 92nd went through Allahabad, and went on to the Cape without me. I could have cried for a week. The men were keen to have me—and so were the officers. You see if they do as well without me.

Then came the final blow, the disaster at Majuba, where Sir George Colley, brave and confident to the last, was killed, and the 92nd shared in the defeat of his force, losing heavily. This was too much for White, and he made one more effort to get away, Lord Ripon again helping him, and again unsuccessfully. On the 7th of March 1881 White writes to his sister :—

GOVERNMT. HOUSE, CALCUTTA,
7th March 81.

I know you will understand the state of mind I have been in ever since I heard about the affair Spitz Kop. I did my best to get out to the 92nd, but the Duke of Cambridge won't hear of it. Lord Ripon too backed me as well as ever. The Duke wired that I could not be allowed to resign without injustice to the other Majors. As Hay & Singleton, who, I believe, represent the Majors, are both reported severely wounded, it is not quite plain why my rejoining would be an injustice to them. The regiment must be nearly without officers of any standing. However, I am not to go, and there's an end of it. The affair, as far as I have heard of it, is utterly inexplicable.

I am unfit for work; I cannot get my thoughts together on any other subject. . . .

It was in many ways a severe blow to White, who felt very keenly the loss of the 92nd in men and officers, and still more keenly the loss of credit which such a defeat brought upon the troops concerned in it. He heard at the same time that he was a Lieut.-Colonel and a C.B. for his services in Afghanistan; but, gratifying as this was, it did little to console him for the misfortune to his regiment. The decision

which prevented his going out with it to the Cape not improbably saved his life, for as a regimental major he could hardly have done much to alter the dispositions of the general in command of the force, and he would certainly have exposed himself with reckless gallantry to the fire of the Boer marksmen.

In March 1881 White started with Lord Ripon for Simla, where he spent the summer. It was a pleasanter summer than he had expected, for after more than two years' separation he had been rejoined by his wife, who had come out from England. Nevertheless White was not reconciled to his appointment, and he awaited with impatience the moment which would set him free. The Viceroy was hard at work upon certain military and internal reforms of importance, and with regard to the former White was able to help him in some measure; but a large part of the Military Secretary's duties were as before connected with the household matters which he so much disliked, though they had at times an element of humour. On the 10th of June he writes to his brother:—

> Something very like the rains has set in. We had the State Ball, in honour of the Birthday, here last night. It poured rain, and made a show of half the women attending.

At that time Simla ladies, as also some men, used the "jhampán," a sort of curtained sedan-chair borne on the shoulders of coolies. A couple, fresh from England, where Indian words were not then familiar,

came through the rain in this way, and were received in the dripping verandah of Government House by White, who expressed a courteous hope that they had not got wet. "Oh no, thank you," the lady answered, "we came along quite comfortably in our paijámas."

I find in my diary of this year various entries about the Whites—for example, "overwhelmed with work, so struck, and played lawn tennis with White, getting shamefully beaten." So White could still hold his own with younger men.

The military reforms, which involved important measures of reorganisation, were to a great extent the work of Colonel George Chesney, R.E.,[1] the talented author of 'The Battle of Dorking,' then in charge of the Military Department. White thought him "a capital despatch writer and a decidedly clever man. . . . He has been 'the true reformer' in fiction and now goes in for the same in fact." Chesney in his turn thought highly of White, and did much to help his advancement in after years.

But to White the great feature of that Simla season was the news that the recommendations in his favour had at last been successful, and that he had been granted the Victoria Cross for his gallantry at Charasia and Kandahar. This was an immense pleasure to him, and removed all feeling of soreness at the former refusals.

[1] Afterwards Major-General Sir George Chesney, K.C.B., &c., who, as M.P. for Oxford, was more successful in the House than an Indian officer usually is.

On the 9th of September White writes to his sister:—

INVERARM, SIMLA,
9th September 81.

As our time for leaving approaches everybody seems sorry to lose us. I shall feel very much parting with my dear old master Lord Ripon. We have got on most pleasantly together, & I shall always be most proud of his having asked me to stay with him. When he made me his Military Secretary he knew nothing of me, but now that he knows me it is a much greater compliment to be sorry to lose me.

On the 9th of October White writes again:—

Our latest news is about a great Investiture of the Bath held here. About 400 people present. The Viceroy gave me the Victoria Cross & made me a flattering speech. The ceremony was held in a tent at night, & the scene was an imposing one.

We have had many great compliments paid us on our approaching departure. Amy is a great favourite with the public.

This was true. His wife was very popular, and had done much during her short stay in Simla not only to make him more contented but to help him in the discharge of his social duties. Soon after this letter was written they left for England.

The last three years had made a great difference in White's life and prospects. When, in the beginning of 1879, he received on the ice at Broughshane the telegram summoning him to rejoin his regiment in India, he was an unknown major of infantry who had never seen a shot fired in action. Now he was perhaps, for his standing, one of the best-known

men in the Army, with a widespread reputation for courage, and for capacity in handling troops on the field. His services had brought him a Lieut.-Colonel's brevet, a Companionship of the Bath, and above all the Victoria Cross, with the command of his regiment. From a soldier's point of view he had every reason for satisfaction and pride. Moreover, though he had never liked his appointment as Military Secretary, it had been of much advantage to him. Not only had it brought him into personal contact with all the chief men in India, military and civil, but it had given him an intimate knowledge of the working of the Indian Government, a knowledge which could not fail to widen his views and make him better fitted for high Indian command in the future.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNEVENTFUL YEARS.

1881-1885.

THE next period of White's life, the three years during which he held command of the 92nd Highlanders, was uneventful; but it was none the less of use to him. At the beginning of it he had the great delight of seeing again the daughter he had not seen for so long. His health had suffered considerably from long service in India, now extending to twenty-seven years, and from the hardships of his Afghan campaigns. The luxurious life on the Viceroy's staff had no doubt done him some good, but it had also brought him some worries, and had prevented him from taking what he always craved, hard regular exercise in the open air, away from society and its trammels. When he left India he was not well, and his winter at home did not set him up as thoroughly as he had hoped. There are no letters or diaries to show how it was passed, but apparently he spent some time in London and at Southsea, the regiment being quartered at Portsmouth; and some was spent in Antrim, where

his doings in the war had now made him a popular hero.

In April 1882 he was at Aix-la-Chapelle, where he had gone alone to take a course of the waters. He had not much knowledge of languages, and he writes to his wife on the 22nd :—

Here I am after a successful journey yesterday from London. By the mercy of Providence I managed to make all the necessary changes on the direct journey, but how I did it I don't quite know. When the names of stations are announced in English it is impossible often to recognise them, but when they are mixed with directions as to where you are to change for, in a foreign tongue or foreign tongues, it becomes rather more confusing than useful. I travelled most of the way with a Spaniard who looked fit to cut anybody's throat at the shortest notice. We took off our hats to each other when we opened or shut the windows, and communicated with each other in single words such as "Douane," "Buffet," &c. . . . All the servants at the hotel speak English, which is a comfort.

23rd April.

My efforts to get a letter from you at the Post office to-day were fruitless, as it was shut. I did not think the Germans were such rigid observers of the Sabbath. The whole town to-day had the air of Scotland about it. The people, however, appear ever so much more happy and good-humoured. I have remarked everywhere the same appearance of peace and contentment. They walk about in family groups, quite happy in each other's society, and with an entire absence of self-consciousness, civil to everybody, and kind to each other. I long so much to be able to talk to them. The children are particularly happy. Every street shows crowds of them at play and at rest, & I have only seen one or two crying. I stopped to-day for a long time opposite a merry-go-round of gigantic proportions regularly loaded with children, riding on tigers,

lions, horses, & all manner of four-footed beasts. I cannot imagine anything more trying to the patience of children than to have (to ?) see others in possession, but the outsiders waited their turns with a spirit of order and calmness that seems to pervade all ages. I am sure they are a delightful people when you know them.

The letter is an illustration of what was one of George White's strongest characteristics—his kindliness and love of children. The next letter is characteristic too :—

There are a lot of English-speaking people here. I am very good friends with them all—a London tailor amongst the number. I often have tea with the tailor. I hate the idea of disliking people because they are low down in the social scale. I daresay they are quite as good as I am.

That was like White; and the democratic spirit is in some respects fostered by residence in India, where Englishmen find themselves in a very small minority, and tend to draw together in consequence.

The local doctor is a very nice German who appears to take great interest in his patients—promises to take all the "*blud*"-poisoning of India out of me if I attend to his directions, and says I ought to be much better than I have been for years when I leave this, always provided I stay as long as he orders me to stay. It is most dismal work, however, and the bad weather makes it worse. There are pretty hills on two sides of Aix-la-Chapelle where I would be very glad to wander about of an afternoon, & I have tried it, but I have had several duckings, and they don't go well with a course of other waters.

How long White stayed, and what the result was, there is nothing to show, for the only remaining letter from Aix-la-Chapelle, wholly undated by the way, is not much later. It refers to the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr Burke in the Phœnix Park :—

> What a terrible state of things this double murder in Ireland shows. Some of the things that come out are so remarkable. . . . The confidence which the murderers must have had in the cowardice or sympathy of the people to commit th murder on a high road in daylight shows what the effect of letting law and order go to the wall is. The people who were first up at the scene appear to have thought of nothing but getting away as fast as possible.

In writing the life of White's contemporary, Alfred Lyall, I have shown how he struck the same note—that the first duty of a Government is to preserve law and order. It was natural that both men, having spent a great part of their lives in India, where any weakness in this respect would be evidently fatal, should recognise at once the true cause of the crime, and hold the administration responsible for it.

When his German doctor considered it right, or perhaps before, White rejoined his regiment at Portsmouth, where he remained until the autumn. The 92nd was then transferred to Edinburgh. The following passages from some notes by Miss Margaret Warrender, afterwards one of his closest friends, give an interesting picture of White as he appeared to those who knew him at this time :—

> My first recollections of Sir George White date from January 1883. He had brought the 92nd from Portsmouth to Edin-

burgh the previous October, and had then gone on leave till after Christmas. My Father,[1] who had always kept closely in touch with his old regiment, had known him in 1864 when quartered in Edinburgh, and had followed his career throughout the Afghan campaigns with the deepest interest; and though none of us—younger ones—had ever seen him, his name and his deeds were household words; and I can remember now how excited we were when he came to dine quietly at Bruntsfield on his first Sunday in Edinburgh. From that evening he was our dear and familiar friend, and constantly with us. The Regiment had made my Father an Honorary Member of their Mess immediately after their arrival—a compliment which greatly pleased him—and Sir George voted himself in return an Honorary Member of our "Schoolroom Mess," and many were the merry tea-drinkings there in which he took part; and for years and years afterwards, any messages, in my letters, to the rest of the family were always addressed to "my messmates."

His wife and children were detained in the South till the summer; and until they settled in Rutland Street, he occupied the C.O.'s house at the Castle, a little low stone house, not very comfortable, half way between the Gate and the Officer's Quarters; and during that time he was more often in our house than in any other, and we found him the most delightful of companions, with the spirits of a boy, always ready for chaff, and yet full of the most interesting talk. The Regiment adored him, and the men would have followed him anywhere. I remember a Sergeant who had fought under him at Kandahar saying to me: "When the Major saw the enemy he was like a lion; he hurried on so quick, we could hardly keep up with him."

In appearance he was then what he very much remained, powerfully framed, but spare and active, and very upright; already rather bald, and with the keenest of blue eyes. I don't remember his ever hunting with us, though he was a fine horseman, and looked well on the big bay charger he

[1] Sir George Warrender, 6th Baronet.

used to ride on duty; but he was devoted to shooting, and during the autumn and winter of 1883 he shot over most of the big places in the south of Scotland.[1]

No incidents of any importance happened during the year and a half he spent in Edinburgh. It was only a very pleasant time. The Scots Greys were quartered at Piershill, and the hereditary tie between them and the 92nd added to the general wellbeing. It was a blow to every one when the regiment was moved to Plymouth, in June 1884, before the usual two years were up; but as we were already in the South we missed the farewell.

It shows how little one can judge what the future may bring, that the thing which at that time most perturbed Sir George's friends (for I don't think he himself gave it much thought), was what would become of him when his command of the Regiment should be over. He had not been through the Staff College, neither had he served on the Staff on active service, so that all chance of a Staff appointment seemed barred; and even his best friends feared that the most that could be hoped for was the command of a Brigade district before retirement. How little they thought that nine years would see him Commander-in-Chief in India.

But White was himself at this time even more perturbed than his friends about his prospects of promotion in the Army—so much perturbed, in fact, that he was making inquiries about the pension due to him if he decided to retire. This was not due to any ill-health or depression of spirits. On the contrary, he writes to his wife on the 4th February 1883:—

I think I am undoubtedly less sensitive to cold than I was last year & I suppose I am in much better health too, as I do

[1] George White was not the man to forego hunting if he could get it; but as a married man with a family to maintain, and dwindling rents, he could not afford to keep hunters.

not suffer so much from sleeplessness and am nearly a stone heavier than I was when I landed in England.

But his letter goes on to discuss in detail the cost of living in the Army, and says that "it is endless worry and mental wear & tear living up to & beyond your income." He had evidently thought over the matter carefully, and was not far from a decision to send in his papers.

I have been seriously thinking of leaving the service and doing my own agency work & looking after Whitehall for a portion of the year at all events.

I have written to the Pension Branch of the War Office and have ascertained that I can in November next get £365 a year and a bonus of £1000. This would be as high a pension as I could look for until I am 55, and then I believe I could not claim the £1000, but would get £600 per ann. pension. . . . If I lived in a more lively part of the world I would not hesitate for a second, and I think that even by living 6 months in Ireland we could afford to be our own masters for the other six, & spend it either in England, Scotland, or abroad. . . .

I have now no prospect from the Army. There must be 12 men A.D.C.'s made since I was recommended, and the two years that have nearly elapsed have spoilt my chances of profiting by promotion now.

I have two chances open to me. One is to follow in the steps of Parker—a miserable command, or to get staff employ in India. The latter is uncertain, & I feel that I have had more than enough of India already.

The letter does not come to any definite conclusion in the matter, and he does not take it up again immediately, but it is clear that, like many men who

have done well in the end, he had at one time very nearly despaired of his fortunes. It should be added that there is nothing of despair in his tone, or of self-pity, as there is none of enthusiasm for further service. He considers the matter coolly, and is much inclined to think that retirement would be the wiser course. Doubtless he was thinking of others as well as himself.

Meanwhile he had been collecting from eyewitnesses all the information he could get regarding the disastrous action at Majuba, and preparing a speech on the subject for a big regimental dinner which was to take place at Edinburgh. He wished to avoid all recrimination and anything like unfairness to others, but to clear the reputation of the regiment from undue blame. Sir George Warrender and other old officers of the regiment were present at the dinner, and White believed that he "got through the story of Majuba very satisfactorily." It must have been a trying and delicate task.

> The old officers [he writes] were particularly obliged, & said they had never known anything about the action before, & some of them said it had taken a load off their minds. . . .

When in the following year the regiment was moved to Plymouth, or rather to Devonport, White had apparently decided not to retire from the service unless he found himself forced to do so. A favourable opportunity shortly occurred, for he was offered the Lieut.-Governorship of Chelsea Hospital, which would have given him a home in London and a considerable addition to his income. But by this time he had no

doubt been invigorated by his stay of more than two years in England, and felt better fitted to undertake another period of foreign service if the chance should offer. Possibly his old chief Sir Fredk. Roberts, now Commander-in-Chief in Madras, had held out to him some prospect of employment in that part of the world. In any case, his decision was, "I am not going to put myself on the shelf before I am obliged," and the offer was refused, with the remark that he still hoped to be able to serve Her Majesty in some more active capacity.

It was not long before he found good reason to congratulate himself upon the conclusion at which he had arrived, for on the 8th February 1885 he received orders to "proceed forthwith to Egypt for employment with the Nile Expeditionary Force." Khartum had fallen, "Chinese Gordon" had been killed, and a force was to advance at once against the Mahdi. The next day White had once more said farewell to his children, and was with his wife in London making his farewell visits and getting his outfit.

His last letters before leaving England show that he was not in very good spirits. To his sisters he writes on the 12th of February:—

> I ought to be very proud of being sent for, but I have not now the enthusiasm of a very young soldier, but will do my best to keep up the name that has been so much made of in Antrim.

On the evening of the 13th he left England.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE SUDAN.

1885.

THE letter ordering White to Egypt had not given him any information as to the post he was to fill, and he left England without knowledge on this point. His orders were simply to go to Cairo and report himself for further instructions to the General commanding there.

On the 16th of February he was at Brindisi, whence he writes to his wife :—

> I cannot hope to hear from you for very long, but as I may be detained in Cairo, write regularly.
>
> Your letters will be the oases in the deserts of the Sudan to me.

And a day or two later, "I have a horrid suspicion that we are not meant for the front." An expedition was being sent to hold Suakin on the sea coast, from which there was an alternative line of advance into the interior, and White feared he might be sent there

instead of joining the main operation up the course of the Nile. This fear proved to be unfounded, for after a day or two of delay at Cairo he received orders from Lord Wolseley to go to Dongola, but he was still "absolutely in the dark as to what capacity I go up in"; and as there were reports that, owing to difficulties of transport, the final advance would not take place till the autumn, he looked forward with apprehension to a summer on the line of communications, with no chance of fighting to make up for the fierce heat and discomfort of the desert.

As matters turned out, he was right enough; but in the meantime he and his travelling companion, Sir Owen Lanyon, who was also going up in uncertainty as to his future work, found much to interest them in the scenery of the Nile valley and the remains of ancient civilisations. On the 25th February his small diary has an entry, "Egyptian night very beautiful. Sunset a blaze of golden glory, followed by veils of purple mist." He writes to his wife from Luxor on the 26th February:—

We have visited the stupendous ruins of Luxor & Karnac this afternoon, and I have been most agreeably surprised. They are indescribable. Masses of monoliths heaped into temples or monuments that awe the visitor by the simplicity of their grandeur. I have seen nothing that has impressed me so much. I was not prepared for their Titanic mould. In Rome and in India I have felt inclined to exclaim, "What wonderful works have been done by man," but here I feel inclined to say, "These are not man's work, but the efforts of giants." . . .

We know nothing more of the appointments we are to fill.

They ought to be good ones to repay us for a summer in the Soudan without the prospect of active service.

By the beginning of March, as the steamer worked its way southward, the heat had become great, and White was told that during the summer the thermometer had stood at 125° in the shade. Our soldiers have to do their work all over the world, under fierce extremes of climate, now lying in their sheepskin coats, numbed with cold, in the frost-bound trenches of Kabul, now marching over the sands of sun-beaten African deserts. But for the present White was in good health and in comfort, so that he did not suffer from the heat of the Sudan. On the 2nd of March he writes to his wife:—

I am a full colonel to-day. . . .

The heat on board the steamer was considerable—96° at at 2.30 under a thick awning, but I never felt anything like so high a temperature so little. The air is so absolutely dry that the thermometer *has very little effect on the heat.* 80° in India would be much worse to bear.

From Assouan on to this (Wady Halfa), Egypt is about ten yards broad on each side of the Nile, often not so much, & beyond, the trackless desert. The poverty of the country is dreadful. We saw numerous crocodiles, and fired shots with a revolver at them to make them move into the water. They strike me as much smaller than the alligators of the Ganges and Indus. . . .

The sunsets on the Nile are very glorious. He sinks down in one unclouded blaze of living light beneath the yellow sand of the desert, and twilight drops a veil of purple and gold behind which the death throes of the waning day melt into the silvered purity of a moonlit desert night.

From Wady Halfa the party went on across the desert. White writes to his wife on the 15th March :—

It would be tedious to tell you the incidents of every day's march. We turned out about an hour before daylight, packed up our tents, when we used them, and mounted our camels & rode at the most tiring foot pace, 2½ miles an hour, for about 8 hours, generally reaching camp about 2.

The camels we had were the ordinary baggage camels of India, and I never had such painfully tedious and tiring work.[1] The thermometer has been 108° in our tents, so you may imagine it is poor fun being out 8 or 9 hours in the burning heat of the sun, generally crossing desert. The border of cultivation on the Nile is in this district generally only a few yards wide. Bad as the weary jolting on camels is, I think the camp is worse, generally in deep sand, & the flies—a sort of midge—are simply maddening. Notwithstanding the heat we sit with our heads tied up in veils or handkerchiefs, & if there is even a hole in the veil the little demons crowd in. They fill ears and nostrils, and are enough to bring on ill-health from the entire want of ease or comfort for a moment. It is impossible to read, & every time you put your hand to your head you kill numbers of them. Luckily their sting is not bad, and they cease their troubling at night, & we have not found the mosquitos very bad. . . . We have all been very well. The only breakdown has been the cook, who says when asked if he is sick, "No, only bone all broke with camel and with sun." I have no skin on my face, & am a fright. I think, however, I stand the fatigue better than any of them. I walked a march of 20 miles to see if I could stand the heat & was none the worse.

[1] The well-bred and well-trained riding camel, with its blood head and slender limbs, is perhaps the easiest mount in the world, certainly for a long distance. It will carry a man all day at a shuffling trot, from six to eight miles an hour, and so smoothly sometimes that he can read a book. The coarse-bred baggage camel jolts a rider horribly.

White was now nearly fifty years of age, so the performance was a good one, as any one would find who tried walking twenty miles over sand with the thermometer at 108° in the shade. His letter goes on :—

The men on this expedition are employed in all sorts of ways. I met two lads becalmed in a nuggah on the Nile as I was on the march yesterday. They had the remains of Gordon Tartan Trews, altho' the seat of the trews were entirely white canvas patches. I asked them if they knew me. "We ken you fine," was the reply, & they told me they thought it miserable work, for the black fellows did not understand one word they said, & if they did they would not do it. As I write they are landing wounded out of the boats on the river. They, poor fellows, have had a bad time of it.

Such are too often the joys of war. There had been fighting in the front, fighting in which Sir Herbert Stewart and General Earle had been killed, and our troops had suffered heavy loss.

At Dongola, which the party reached by boat, White found orders to go on to Tani.

This I like very much, as I believe it is to be the extreme front. It is very hard to get any information, in fact Wolseley gives you much more at home than we get here. . . . I shall now look forward to resuming active operations in August, and I ought to be in a good position for a fair start.

In the meantime there had been some excitement in India with regard to the state of affairs on the

northern border of Afghanistan, where an Anglo-Russian Commission was engaged in demarcating the frontier line. Things were not going too well, and some preparations had been made for possible hostilities. In these circumstances the Indian authorities thought of White; and he had hardly arrived at Tani, where he was to act as Assistant Adjutant-General under General Dormer, when he was uprooted again. He writes to his wife on the 27th March from Debbeh :—

I think the authorities must have conspired to kill me, for I have had a time of it. . . . I took up duties of Assistant Adjutant-General & thought I had settled down. Had also the delight of a bundle of letters, one from you. . . . On the 25th I received this telegram: "From Lord Wolseley to Colonel White. India asks for you to command Brigade. Quetta Field Force. No objection. Wire reply to Dongola."

You may imagine I was surprised, but determined to accept, & wired to Wolseley: "Presume Quetta Field Force means service. I therefore accept, and leave by quickest route, probably steamer *Lotus*."

Both General Dormer and I thought this quite final, & I sold many things, gave away others, & started by the *Lotus* this morning. Here at Debbeh I got two telegrams from Lord W. The first said, Don't leave, as Indian Government have asked us to suspend action. The second, "Government of India don't now require your services." You may imagine my disgust and disappointment. I went straight to telegraph office, wired to Lord Wolseley, Sir Donald Stewart,[1] Sir Fred. Roberts, and Lord Ripon, asking for support, as I had acted on the offer and started, having made every preparation. I don't expect any good, but it (is?) hard after

[1] Then Commander-in-Chief in India.

spending a lot of money & working all day in the sun with the thermometer at 125° in the shade to have to travel back disappointed, across the desert, & looking a fool.

It was no doubt a painful disappointment, but White had to go back to Tani next day.

Started back on camel [he writes in his diary], very low. . . Felt tired & out of sorts, first time. How my mind acts on my body.

He took up his duties again and was soon hard at work. It was rather dreary work, for there seemed to be no hope of an advance, and there was some sickness among the troops. The line of communication was long, and it was difficult to keep the force supplied.

We are very short of a lot of things [he writes on the 10th of April], and even now cannot see our way to them. We have been without tobacco, sugar, soap, salt, and other things for a long time, and our papers arrive after weeks of delay. Of course we can get on without these things, but they are great comforts. . . . None of the regiments here have had a drop of anything to drink for months. Tea has been the dinner beverage since January last. We on the Head Quarters Staff here have some whisky and are the envy of all. . . . Of course it is dull work living as we are. I would not grumble in the least if there was a prospect of service next autumn, and it is the hope of an advance that keeps me, for one, in spirits, but it seems hard that I should have lost a Brigade in India by being stuck on the Nile out of my turn in time of profound quiet. . . . There is really no hardship, and if I had fallen into this position by roster I would have been quite content. I stand the heat well so far.

Meanwhile England and India had been stirred by the "Panjdeh incident," when a Russian force attacked and dispersed, with severe loss, a body of Afghans, almost under the eyes of the British Commission. It was rough diplomacy, to say the least, and very nearly led to war between Russia and England. Even Mr Gladstone, with all his love of peace and friendly feeling for the Russians, seems to have contemplated the possibility of war; and but for the fact that the Afghan Amir was then in India with Lord Dufferin, war would probably have broken out. In the end it was avoided—happily; but Russia was then so weak in Central Asia that we had nothing to fear from it, and in some respects the results might have been greatly to strengthen our position. Even the prospect of hostilities did so, for it led to a remarkable outburst of loyalty in India,—which, by the way, ought to have prepared Europe, or at least England, for the attitude of India in 1914. Of course our troops on the Nile, weary of inaction, would have gladly heard that the gauntlet had been thrown down, and the news that there was a chance of it was received with cheers; but on the 18th April White read a Reuter telegram saying that consols had risen again from 94 to 97, and he remarks, "I suppose we are to eat dirt pie again."

At this time he did not see much prospect of advancement in the service, and he writes to his wife, who was leaving their old home in Devonport:—

Your next letter will probably be written in all the agony of starting out of No. 2 Nelson Terrace. It was the nicest house we have yet had, and I shall always look back upon it as the abode in which I finished my soldiering career, for regimental soldiering has been so long my brand of the business its close is my close.

Far from being closed, his career as a soldier, in the field, had hardly begun. He had seen his first fight less than six years before. He was not to see his last until fifteen years later. But the remark is worth quoting as an illustration of the fact that White considered himself, and was, essentially a regimental officer until he was nearly fifty years of age. It was probably this long regimental training that gave him what distinguished him in a special degree, the understanding of British soldiers—the knowledge of what they felt, and what they could and could not do,—and consequently the power of handling them easily in peace and war.

White was not to remain much longer in the Sudan; but I quote a few more extracts from his letters written while there:—

To Mrs White.

TANI, 18*th April* 1885.

I feel like a schoolboy beginning his half-year at school & scratching out the weeks as the time passes towards the next holidays. It will be 10 weeks to-morrow since I got the order to start. . . .

My day is generally about as follows: turn out about ½ past 5. I generally then have some business to do about the Camp, & either walk or ride a little Russian pony I have

got for an hour. All around is desert & stones, so there is no interest; and it is only the fear of ill-health or work that makes me ever take exercise. If you walk, the sand comes over your boot, & one soon has enough of walking in such going when the temperature is so high. . . .

Since last I wrote we have got some salt, sugar, soap, & tobacco, so all are in fairly good humour. . . .

Won't it be provoking if our march to Khartoum cuts me out of a Brigade in India? I must leave at 55 years old, & it would be a great thing for me to have nearly 5 years Indian Command.

To Miss Jane White.

CAMP TANI, 19*th April* 85.

You must not relax in your regular letters to me. They are always most valuable, but absolutely priceless when your devoted brother & head of your family is living in the midst of the Soudan Desert steeped in sand & monotony; ever on the look-out for a change to better known battlefields in Afghanistan, or for the excitement of an attack here now, or even the certainty of an advance to Khartoum hereafter. My life is spent in a little tent that weighs about 100 lbs., tent, poles, iron pegs all together; and as the sun knows how to shine in the land of Cush, this little tent becomes very much like an oven about 10 A.M. However, we are all well, & moderately cheerful. Many are buoyed up by the hope of an advance to Khartoum as soon as the Nile is high enough to make a move, which ought to be in August, I think. We have to do everything for ourselves here, & the men have become very handy campaigners. They are finished boatmen, having rowed & sailed up the Nile for months. They can ride & look after camels, & now they are building huts and making bricks every morning & evening. They have all built ovens out of the mud on the bank of the Nile, & turn out very fair bread—brown bread, Jane—made out of Dhowrra flour. Every evening at six o'clock the whole camp

turns into the Nile. We are only allowed to bathe from 6 to 7, as it is of vital importance to keep the water as clean as possible for drinking purposes, & at low Nile the stream is sluggish.

I hope when you get this you will be in the enjoyment of summer weather. We could spare you a little brightness here, but you would enjoy the evenings & the nights. The sunsets on the Nile are most brilliant. The cloudless skies, of course, do not afford the golden linings that give variety to sunsets in the rainy season in India, but otherwise they are the finest I have ever seen. I am watching with intense anxiety for some positive utterance with regard to the plan of campaign in the autumn. The betting here is 3 to 1 against our going on to Khartoum. If we are not bound for Khartoum I want to be out of this infernal desert as soon as possible. I would wait patiently for the autumn, if we are then to "smash the Mahdi." . . .

To Mrs White.

CAMP TANI, 24*th April* 1885.

This place, robbed of the hope of active work in autumn, is simply too miserable to contemplate. When Gladstone's warlike announcement arrived & was posted up on the board in Camp on which public telegrams are posted the men cheered at the hope of getting out of this, even at the expense of a War with Russia. Such a war is a big thing to contemplate, & it would be professional death to be out of it.

But I must wait the turn of events with others. I am very curious to know what cut me out of the Brigade Command at Quetta. . . .

The prices things realise here are quite extraordinary. . . . I think I told you that an Indiarubber shirt collar sold in General Earle's sale brought £2, 5s., and that *half* a bottle of Brandy sold here a week ago for 15 shillings.

In the Land of Egypt,
24*th April* 1885.

My dear Rosie,—

I know a little lady far away to whom a letter is owed, and as I would not like that little lady to suppose that her father had given up paying his debts since he had to dwell among the wicked Egyptians, I am sitting down on oh! such a small stool, on oh! such a hot day, to write her a letter.

I am building a house on the banks of the Nile, and the black men who ought to be working very hard are sitting down under a tree doing nothing. If I go out and scold them, they don't understand me, & it makes me very hot, so I have to look on at the lazy fellows, and hope they will do a little work when the sun is not quite so hot.

We had a black gentleman to dine with us on Tuesday last. His name is Kasm-el-Mons, and he was a great friend of General Gordon's and fought for him as long as he could. He rode into our Camp with a great many followers beating drums. Some of his men were riding on donkeys, and some on camels, & some on horses. The men on horses rode as fast as they could, flourishing their spears as if they were fighting their enemies, & they all made such a grand show that the English soldiers thought it was the Mahdi come to make peace. . . . I cannot send you any more photographs, as there is not a shop within 120 miles of where I am, not even a shop where I could buy a pin. Give my love to mother . . . and Believe me,

Your loving Father,

George S. White.

He asks his wife to make the child keep up writing to him. "What a dear little holy-minded child she is. I value the little letters very much."

Early in May there was a concentration of the troops in the Sudan, and General Dormer was appointed to take command of the Advanced Field

Force, with White as Adjutant-General. This necessitated a move from Tani to Debbeh, and much new work, which White enjoyed. He liked his General and the Staff, one of whom was "Major Kitchener, who is intelligence officer."[1] At Debbeh White remained for the rest of the month, in comparative luxury. He writes to his wife on the 17th May :—

I have come in for the mud hut that Lanyon had. It is a fairly good one. The walls are built of mud bricks, & I am sorry to say the white ants have got well into it. I have also a most interesting family of little mice, who are quite tame, and who run over me when I lie down. I watch with much sympathy their attacks on the white ants, whom they eat in great numbers. Wood, my servant, has tried to brighten up the crumbling walls of my habitation by putting pictures out of the old 'Graphics' and 'Illustrateds' on to them. . . . I get up very early, and usually take a solitary stroll into the desert, coming back about 7 to work & my toilet. The latter does not occupy much time, as I have cut my hair quite close, and a dip in an India rubber bucket does for wash, brush, and comb. Last night I observed a most singular light on the opposite bank of the river, & we soon found out that some of the grass huts here had taken fire. They burn down in a few minutes, and require most careful watching, especially if tenanted by sick. Last night the fire took place in grass huts occupied by the wives of Bashi-Bazouks. One woman declared she had not been able to save her child, & that it had been roasted. The significant fact was elicited that it was a *female* child. The people here are very savage. They live in such a state of war with their kind that human life and human suffering are thought nothing of. Kitchener tells me that on board one of the steamers which met our force at

[1] Now Earl Kitchener.

Metemmeh a child was crying and annoying the soldiers on board. One of them at last threw it overboard into the Nile, where it was drowned. . . .

White was much troubled at this time not only by the cruelty of the people to each other, but at our abandonment of those who had served us. He always felt deeply indignant at this result of our retirements from country once occupied by us, and was himself most careful in after years to make no promises. It is a painful thing to any man who has feelings of honour and humanity to leave behind natives of the country, well knowing that they will suffer at the hands of our enemies a fearful retribution for their services to the foreigner. It has happened too often in the course of our Eastern wars that the exigencies of a British Government—perhaps of English party politics—have brought about such incidents. About this White writes to his wife :—

The movement about to commence next week will probably result in the massacre of many of those who have been fools enough to believe our word plighted by Lord Wolseley that we would not give them up again.

And in a letter of the same date to his brother :—

I cannot say I am sorry to leave this beastly desert, but next to a possible abandonment of the Irish Roman Catholic Loyalists of Ireland to Home Rule, perhaps the very cussedest, cowardliest, and falsest abandonment ever made is that your humble servant is now aiding in.

For himself White was now hoping that he would get a Brigade command in Madras. He knew that

Sir Frederick Roberts wanted to give it him, and believed the Horse Guards would consent. He liked his new experience—Staff work—but felt that the Brigade would be the best thing for him, though he did not expect it could lead to much. Unless he became a Major-General before he was fifty-five he would under rule be forced to retire, and he had little hope of such promotion coming in time. He writes to his wife :—

About my own movements, now that this business is going to end, I cannot tell you. It will not do for me to be in too great a hurry to be off, but I hope I may be appointed to the Indian Brigade. I would now willingly go in for more troublesome work, as I have found myself quite able to take up the work of this Department under very trying circumstances & on active service, without a clerk worth anything, in fact I do everything myself, but I have to work 10 hours a day. I don't think, however, I could stand it at the present rate for very long. Nothing will pay me like India. Of course I must look forward to a close of my career in 5 years, as Madras is not the place to make a mark that would justify an exception being made in my favour.

The Brigade will be vacant end of August, & I hope I may get home long before it is necessary to start.

A week later he heard that his appointment had been approved by the Duke of Cambridge, and as the Advanced Field Force in the Soudan was to break up on the 1st of June he applied for leave to England. Meanwhile he had his hands full.

The work here has been very heavy [he writes to his wife on the 25th May], especially to me who am the only regular Staff officer. There is no Quartermaster-General, & the

move at low Nile is troublesome & anxious work. We have a great scarcity of transport, & were it not for Buller's boats we should be stuck.

I do look forward to being with you once again. I have stood this work & heat far better than I had any right to expect, & hope I may not break down now. I put the thermometer in a bell tent here 3 days ago, & it went up to 125°, so you may judge what the climate is.

28th May.

The evacuation has commenced, and the troops are now in full swing on the river. They now row with a will, as the prows are turned towards the sea. The Black Watch, the old 42nd, are at the front of the Advanced Field Force, & I expect to see their red backs passing this in two or three hours. I have applied to go down to Cairo direct and thence to England. If this is granted I hope to be in England the 30th of June. . . .

It will be better for me to go out to India alone in the first place, both on account of the season and that I may see whether it will suit me. . . . If war with Russia breaks out I shall be on the spot, and I have already seen so many down here I believe I am tough enough for hard work still.

You will be glad to hear that I come in for the medal to be given for this expedition. There are so many getting it who have not been shot at I have less hesitation in applying for it.

White's hesitation, if he had any, was what few would have felt in such circumstances. It would be hard indeed if on an expedition of this kind those who had borne the burden and heat of the day had been debarred from the medal because they had not had a chance to join in the fighting which relieved the tedium and hardships of the campaign for their more fortunate companions.

His leave was granted, and on the 31st of May he writes to his brother :—

EL DEBBEH, 31*st May* 85.

To mark this as a red-letter day I write in red ink. The fact that I have nothing else also has much to do with it. We go on board our Nugga in an hour, & I hope not to be interrupted in my journey straight to London, where I intend to spend my 50th birthday. The Indian Brigade is all right, and I must join out there the end of August. This lets me in for the Red Sea in the hottest month of the year. I am very glad to get out of this wretched country. We have left it, as we now leave every place we touch, in a state of anarchy. . . .

My pen won't write, & neither my ideas nor my ink will flow at this early hour, so I will put off more till we meet. The scene is a curious one. There are wild Bashi-Bazouks marching to barbaric strains past our mud huts. Tents are being struck by the Egyptian regular troops, and the most glorious Nile sunrise gilds the picture. Everywhere there is ruin. The Fort built by the Bashi-Bazouks stands without inhabitant except "the lean dogs beneath the wall." All the huts that surrounded the fort were burnt down by these people before they marched, as they delight in destruction, & the blackened & charred embers are all that remain of the British & Egyptian joint occupation . . .

On the 30th of June, as he had expected, White was in England.

The Nile expedition, though it brought him no fighting or chance of special distinction, had not been without advantage to him. To be selected for it was in itself a proof that the military chiefs thought well of him. I have been told that one of them advised Lord Wolseley to ask for White's services because he had never forgotten hearing the men of the 92nd

saying after Majuba: "If the Major had been here this would never have happened." Whether the story is true I cannot say, but in any case Lord Wolseley acted of his own accord, without any application on White's part. And setting aside the manner of his selection, White gained in this short expedition some valuable experience of duties which were new to him —those of a Staff officer in the field. He also saw a fresh country, and service under conditions different from any to which he had been accustomed. All this was useful training for the future. No doubt, too, his work in the Sudan made him better known to officers who had not served in India; and, as he himself felt, the way in which he had got through the work and exposure showed that he was still physically fit for rough campaigning. The dreary months he spent in the Nile Valley had not been altogether wasted.

CHAPTER XX.

RETURN TO INDIA—THE BURMESE WAR.

1885.

DURING White's absence in Egypt his wife and children had been for the most part living with her parents at Kew, and there he found them on his return. He had not a long time to spend with them, for he was expected to join his new command, the Kampti Brigade, before the close of the summer; and on the 14th of August, after six weeks in England, he was once more on his way out. As always, he felt the parting from them keenly, and a few days later he writes to his Edinburgh "messmate," Miss Warrender, that they have gone to Whitehall.

> I delight in being at Whitehall with them, as the children enjoy it so much. They people every pine-tree and weeping shrub with fairies good and bad. . . . The hard part of service in India is the thought that they will have passed out of the fairy stage altogether before I see them again.

These separations are the curse of India, and White

was specially tender-hearted about children. He writes to his wife on the 30th August:—

> Have you read a book called 'Hard Lines'? . . . I wept over it yesterday, & had to stow myself away in a lonely part of the ship to escape being found out.

Meanwhile he had been delighted to hear, at the end of July, that Sir Frederick Roberts was to be Commander-in-Chief in India.

On the 1st of September White arrived in Kampti and took over his Brigade, which consisted of the 2nd Munster Fusiliers, two regiments of Madras Native Infantry, the 7th and 20th, and one of Madras Light Cavalry, the 4th. He was pleased with all of them, and settled down contentedly enough to his new life.

Kampti, it may be noted, though within the military charge of the Commander-in-Chief in Madras and garrisoned by troops of the Madras army, was situated in the Central Provinces of India, and not in the Southern Presidency.

White writes to his sister on the 13th September:—

> KAMPTEE, CENTRAL PROVINCES, INDIA,
> 13*th Sept.* 85.

I have a pretty house & good garden, a nice little tank with a fountain, & plenty of goldfish. The river runs along the back of my garden, & I get nice breeze off it. We have some cholera, but not much. However, out of 10 cases that I visited in the cholera hospital about a week ago 7 are now dead & 3 are still under treatment. Not an encouraging proportion of recoveries to make the natives go into hospital when attacked. . . .

To his wife he writes on the 1st October:—

KAMPTEE, 1*st Oct.* 85.

I do wish I had you here. I have no taste for housekeeping, & leave everything to my head boy, who is a very good fellow, but not up to undivided & unsuperintended control. We have been having any amount of gaiety, dances, which I don't patronise much, races, theatricals, and now a fancy ball at Nagpur. The Munster Fusiliers are very strong in this & in most lines. They are a capital regiment. . . .

But White was not to be left many weeks in the enjoyment of the gaieties of Kampti. Trouble was brewing in Burma, beyond the eastern frontier of the Indian Empire, and before the end of the month his services were required in that direction. It seems desirable to explain briefly what the Burmese trouble was. Sir Alfred Lyall, in his 'Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava,' has put the matter very clearly.

It has always [he writes] been the policy of the British Indian Government to prevent any other European power from obtaining a foothold within the Asiatic states situated on the borders of our actual possessions. Just as a fortress or a line of entrenchments requires an open space around or in front of it, so it is manifestly advantageous for the security of a kingdom to be surrounded by a ring of territories with which powerful neighbours must not meddle. Upon this principle we place the adjoining states under our protectorate, whether they desire it or do not; and thus our political influence radiates out beyond the line of our actual possession, spreading its skirts widely and loosely over the lands adjacent. From the time when the British dominion was first established in India, the prosecution of this policy has been one leading motive of wars, annexations, and alliances.

Pointing out that the same policy had been practised by the Romans, and with similar results, Lyall goes on to explain that Burma, which lay immediately to the east of Bengal, had always been reckoned as forming part of the glacis that encircles our Indian lines of defence. And from the time of Napoleon the Indian Government had been continually on the watch to prevent it from falling into the hands of the French, who were believed to have designs upon it.

In 1885 Burma was no longer as extensive as it had been, for we had twice been at war with the Burmese, and had annexed their maritime provinces. But it was still a large state, much larger in area than Great Britain, with a population estimated at four millions; and we still regarded it as one of the frontier states over which our influence must be paramount.

Unfortunately the Burmese had never accepted this view, and in 1879 their attitude had become so unfriendly that it was found necessary to withdraw the British representative, for whose personal safety there was reason to fear. After his withdrawal matters went from bad to worse. Our Treaty rights were openly disregarded, our traders were oppressed, our remonstrances were treated with contempt; and by 1885 the position had become almost intolerable. But, as shown in earlier chapters of this memoir, the period from 1879 to 1885 had seen us involved in troubles upon the western side of the Empire, in war with Afghanistan, and in the prospect of war with Russia. It was no time, therefore, for fresh adven-

W. & A.K. Johnston, Limited, Edinburgh & London

tures to the eastward, and the wrongs inflicted upon us by the Burmese were endured as best they might be.

Such was the state of affairs when, in the spring of 1885, it was reported that the King of Burma had entered into a Treaty with the French, by which they were granted special privileges; and it was soon made clear that British influence had been, or was about to be, supplanted in Burma by the influence of France. At the same time, emboldened by his Treaty, the king offered fresh provocation by imposing an unjust and ruinous fine upon a British company trading in his dominions.

This was too much; and the Indian Government came reluctantly to the conclusion that the moment for serious action had arrived. By good fortune the prospect of war with Russia had now for the time been averted, and the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, was free to deal with the Burmese. In these circumstances, with the consent of the Queen's Government, he decided to send an ultimatum to King Thebaw. His Majesty was required to settle outstanding grievances, to receive a permanent Resident at his Court, and to defer for the future to British advice in regard to his foreign relations. An immediate answer was demanded; and 10,000 British troops were assembled in British Burma to enforce the demand if necessary.

The news of the assembling of these troops became known in October 1885, and White immediately telegraphed offering his services. His offer was accepted,

and he was appointed to command the 2nd Brigade of the Burma Expeditionary Force, a brigade consisting of the 67th Hampshire Regiment and the 12th and 23rd Madras Infantry. Major-General Prendergast, of the Royal Engineers, was to command the whole force.

On the 3rd of November, after some days of heavy rain, which flooded the camps of the selected regiments, White embarked at Madras, and four days later his ship anchored off the mouth of the Irawadi.

From there he writes to his wife on the 7th November :—

BRITISH INDIA S.S. COPY.'S "NEVASA,"
7th Novbr. 85.

I visited the different regiments in my Brigade in their camps, and found the Sepoys quite cheerful under their trials and very keen. I have been so far very agreeably surprised by the efficiency & spirit shown by the Madras Army, & if they work as well under fire as they do on parade I shall become a very warm supporter of the Madras Sepoy, or as his officers like to call him, "the representative of the Grand old Coast Army." . . .

On Monday night General Prendergast & the officers of the Burma Expeditionary Force were entertained at dinner by Mr Grant Duff.[1] The Governor made a short speech, & General Prendergast answered . . . There was no more speaking. After dinner I had a long talk with Mr Grant Duff, who was very interesting. I got him on his own subject, "European Politics," and enjoyed his conversation very much. Home early in a downpour to a wet tent. . . .

We expect to arrive in the Irrawaddy to-morrow morning, & then I suppose we shall hear very soon what answer

[1] The Governor of Madras, afterwards Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, G.C.S.I., &c.

Theebaw has sent to the Viceroy's ultimatum. I cannot think that anything will now turn us from Mandalay, but I hope that Theebaw's answer may be defiant, so that we may have soldier's and not policeman's duty to perform in going up there. . . .

The answer of the Burmese was, in fact, unsatisfactory, and the force advanced without delay. It was a small force with which to invade a country so extensive as Burmah; but we had fought the Burmese twice before, and experience had shown that, although a vainglorious enemy, they were a feeble one; while the broad waters of the Irawadi offered an easy highway to their capital. The mouths of the river, and a considerable portion of its course, had long been in British hands, and the upper part of the river was well known. The Burmese were believed to have no heavy artillery, or knowledge of mines, so that the progress of a British flotilla of steamers was not likely to meet with dangerous opposition; and though there were some small forts and stockades along the river banks, they were not expected to offer a very stubborn resistance to British guns and storming parties. It was confidently hoped, therefore, that General Prendergast's force of about ten thousand men would suffice to take Mandalay.

This hope was not disappointed. The fine steamers of the Irawadi Flotilla Company afforded ample carriage, and the force advanced in ease and comfort. There was some fighting at the Minhla Fort and one or two other points, but nothing of importance, and before the end of November Mandalay was in British

hands. The operation had been well thought out and was completely successful. As often happens in Eastern warfare, the occupation of the enemy's capital proved to be only the beginning of our difficulties, but that is a different question. General Prendergast had done what he was ordered to do.

White thoroughly enjoyed the advance up the river, the scenery of which is beautiful, the banks being often hilly and well wooded, and dotted with golden-topped pagodas. The following are some extracts from his letters:—

To Mrs White.

ON THE IRRAWADDY NEAR PROME,
15th Novr. 85.

Some of the Burman prisoners we took yesterday crawled up to us on all fours Theebaw fashion, expecting to have their throats cut at once, but I patted them on the back & made the interpreter tell them to be of good cheer, that we would not cut their throats, & that Theebaw would not reign over them any more. They immediately pulled out long cheroots & began to smoke peacefully. I asked where their wives were; they replied in the jungle, not far off, so I told them to bring them back & nobody would harm them. . . .

To Mrs White.

BURMAH, *25th Novr.* 85.

To-day I had a long talk with a group of Burmans, who seemed very soon to have got confidence in us, & who talked of our Bombardment as of a capital joke. One Pounghyee or monk described to me with great laughter how two other monks had been killed by the bursting of one of our shells; all the group laughed too. I made my interpreter ask what the Burmans would do to us if we fell into their hands as

they were now in ours. This caused a great laugh & a prompt answer, "kill you." . . .

To Miss Jane White.

OFF AVA,[1] *27th Novr.* 85.

Three hours ago I was writing the detailed orders for the officers commanding regiments in my Brigade, with a view to the attack on a redoubt which is now lying within easy range of the steamer in which I am writing. I thought we were quite certain to have a fight for the possession of Mandalay, and am uncivilised enough to regret that Theebaw has given in without allowing us to win our spurs. Yesterday afternoon we began to entertain doubts, as a Royal barge, with about 50 rowers with oars all gilt and flashing in the setting sun, told us that the enemy was not above treating farther with us. This morning another State barge, with a white flag flying, made for the Head Quarter ship. We could read the signal sent to the Naval Brigade, who pilot us, not to fire without further orders. We have heard nothing definite since, but the game, as far as a military enterprise goes, is evidently up. . . .

5th Decr.

This is the first private line I have written since the above, & I have seen so very much since I find it difficult to know where to begin.

My surmise was too correct. We had made all ready to assault the city of Ava, & I had been told off to the front of the fight with my Brigade, when little by little it eked out that we were to walk in. I have been playing a part in very remarkable events, I think the most remarkable of my eventful life. I wish I had had more time to keep an accurate record of all that has passed, but I have been very heavily worked, & have had to leave my private affairs and letters to look after themselves.

On the 27th I was ordered to land some of my Brigade &

[1] The ancient capital, some miles below Mandalay.

disarm a fort at Sagaing on the right bank of the Irrawaddy. There was not only no opposition, but the soldiers and people were quite cheerful over the change of masters. I sent an order to my predecessor the Burmese General to come and hand over to me. He was discovered in his hut eating his dinner, & when told to come at once he said he would like to finish his dinner. However, it was hinted to him that his dinner of to-morrow might be unnecessary if he got my dander up, so he leisurely lit a cheroot and lounged out, & immediately sat down & appeared entirely unconcerned. Long before I got to his fort I told (him ?) I would show him where I had intended to assault it, & took him to the place. He said, "Yes, you could have got in there." He did not seem the least surprised at my knowledge of his fort. I had, of course, accurate plans of it, & had laid down the orders for assaulting it.

As I was employed disarming the forts on the right bank & shipping the guns and small arms, the rest of the fleet sailed past me to Mandalay, some 6 or 8 miles further up. I followed, and found orders to land at once and occupy Mandalay. I had a case of cholera on board, a European soldier, & had to get rid of him on to the cholera barge, which delayed me, but we marched up to the Palace through the town. The people sat outside their houses, looking quietly on. There was no outside semblance of hostility, and curiosity was the most marked feature.

I occupied the Western gate of the palace, which is, or was, the ladies' entrance. I would allow neither egress nor ingress. Crowds of very smartly dressed young ladies came to the gate with great urns of lacquer work, some of them jewelled (the urns), with the dinners of the ladies of the palace, which were apparently all cooked outside.

Colonel Sladen, who is the political officer of the expedition, however, sent me word that the ladies might be allowed to come and go freely. I entered a protest that everything of small size and great value would be passed out by the ladies.

However General Prendergast backed the ladies, and thousands of pounds worth of booty were, I am sure, lost to the army.

I had been told that the 67th Regiment, part of my Brigade, was to remain in the Palace & guard its gates, as Theebaw was inside, & it was feared he would escape. At the last moment General Prendergast, who was unhappy about the Palace, asked me to take command. I had nothing with me, & the place we occupied was a morass. I held Theebaw tight, however, and only got a bad cold for my damp and cold night. There was a good deal of firing during the night, as bands of dacoits (robbers) were soon formed from the Burmese soldiery, & our troops had not got proper hold of the outside city. All our efforts were at first directed to securing Theebaw & his Palace. The Palace lies in the centre of the town, has a magnificent broad road right round its outer palisade. Inside the palisade is a wall 20 ft. high

To Mrs White.

MANDALAY,
7th December 85.

As we approached Ava the sightly pagodas became more & more numerous. The facades of these pagodas are often covered with little bits of mirror glass, and throw back the rays of the sun like a heliograph mirror.

It was on the evening of the 26th, as the sun was pouring a flood of golden light upon the last hours of Burman independence, that the smooth & uninterrupted lustre of the Irrawaddy's broad bosom was suddenly broken by flashing of many golden oars & the richly gilded state barge of the King. The white flag told us too surely, from a soldier's point of view, what the mission of the white-robed Ministers was. They were, however, promptly dismissed with a message that unconditional surrender of the King & the country was the only term. This they hesitated about, & we thought we might have a chance of having to take the place. It was, of course, uncivilized to be disappointed, but, on the other

hand, think that I had been given the hard work, & had all my plans written out & prepared. Now we have but little of interest to soldiers to tell of. . . .

The 29th was, I think, the most remarkable of my life, & it has not been devoid of incident. Early in the forenoon Colonel Sladen became uneasy about Theebaw, as he showed signs of fright, & he feared he might try to escape. I strongly advised to put him in charge of a guard at once, & a guard of the 67th Regt. was marched into the sacred confines of the Palace, & had the Lord of the White Elephant surrounded in a twinkling. He appeared not to be so much afraid of the White Soldiers, but when the officer of the Guard's servant (a black man) came in with the officer's luncheon, Theebaw was much disturbed, & asked if he was the executioner. If he had been the conqueror he well knew how soon the services of that functionary would have been required. About noon General Prendergast arrived from his ship, and the troops were held in readiness to line the road along which Theebaw & his companions had to travel. The Royal Gate of the Palace, never used except by Royalty, was thrown open, & the beautiful Palace of Mandalay exposed to view. No doubt the whole scene has been many times repeated in the 'Illustrated' & 'Graphic.' I accompanied General Prendergast to the pavilion to which Theebaw had retired. He was sitting in the corner of an open verandah. In Burmah the floors are all raised off the ground two or three feet. His eyes roamed about uneasily, but he was dignified. He did not attempt to rise, & the ladies of the Court crouched on their knees before & behind him. He was asked to come to the ship that was sent to take him away at once, but he said he would be ready to-morrow. However, he had been told he must be ready to start when called for, & he was given ten minutes. These ten minutes were prolonged to an hour & two hours. At last he was ordered to come, & after a vain attempt had been made to get him one of his own highly-gilded coaches, he was offered conveyance in a hospital doolie.

This he scorned for himself & Queens, & boldly started on a walk, the longest of his life, I should think, from the way he waddled along. I was much struck by the demeanour of his Menghyees, or Ministers, who had really made over his Kingdom to us, & their King with it. They appeared in great awe of him, & crouched before him like the crowd. The evil-faced Tynedah Menghyee, who is said to revel in blood, showed outward veneration at all events for his fallen lord. At the first interviews we had in the verandah, the Queen Mother spoke much. She is reported to have given very good advice and to have said, "the Burmese fought the English once before when they—the Burmese—had all the resources of Lower Burmah at their command. The result was that they lost their sea-ports and most of their country. Reduced as they now are, they are sure to lose the rest."

The sight was a most extraordinary one as the procession reached the top of the stairs at the grand entrance. General Prendergast and his staff, in sombre kharki, led the way. The Queen Mother, in plain but very clean silk, led the Burmese royalties, then Theebaw, holding one Queen by each hand, descended. I was sorry for him. He showed a great deal of dignity, I thought, and the tenderness with which he treated his Queens was chivalrous at such a time. The Royalties were followed by an immense crowd of servants bearing large bundles, probably containing the wealth of the palace. The Burmese crowd pressed heavily upon the party, & would have looted them, I am sure, had they not been kept back by our troops. Some of the bundles must have contained a fortune. I saw one servant, the moment she got out of the Palace Gate, dash through the ranks of the Sepoys with a bundle on her head & disappear in the crowd. She had probably stolen a good haul. The Royal party were helped into bullock carriages at the Palace Gate & hurried down to the steamer. The young Queen, who was pretty, bemoaned her fate when she saw the steamer, & said, "I don't want to go."

The General asked me to secure the Palace & all its valuables, and I had for ten days the very heavy work of searching the Palace for valuables & packing up everything. Colonel Sanford & Captain Woodward, R.N., were my assistants, and we had large parties of sailors from the ships, men of the Naval Brigade, to help in the searching & packing. In one dark corner we found 10,400 Rupees. The quantities of boxes of French silk were fabulous. More like the turn-out from some great shop in Paris than a supply for private use. I often wished I had you with me to sift the wheat from the chaff. We had no experts. A great quantity of gold vessels, crown jewels, ivory, & ladies' wearing apparel. It was good fun to see Jack trying on a pair of lady's pyjamas of the finest silk, but often of the brightest colors. The Burmans delight in the brightest colors, & a Burman crowd is consequently very pretty. I was disappointed in the amount of jewels that we found. I thought we should have found quantities of rubies, as part of the revenue is paid from the ruby mines. One or two beautiful pieces of French jewelry were turned out of odd corners. One tiara must have cost much more than £1000. We also found a case of very lovely little watches. One was a beetle; when you touched the spring, its highly jewelled wings were spread & opened out the face of a little watch of most perfect finish. There were many articles of high value in the same case. There were, however, cases for rings & jewel-cases lying empty about the Royal apartments. They had evidently been rifled by some one, & I suspect the women who were allowed to come & go freely carried off everything they knew to be of great value. Some of the Crown jewels were, I think, very valuable, but they have yet to be tested. An English-speaking Burman, who was about the King's Court, has quite identified himself with us now. He assured me that one article I got was covered with real pearls. I got one of the pearls between my finger & thumb and it became dust. I think the Royal people must have been greatly cheated by

the French. No doubt they paid immense sums for trumpery make-believes.

We found two solid golden figures of Gautama, with the weight marked on them, about a stone each. Other figures of Gautama had lost all recognition from being profusely overlaid with gold leaf. Every leaf of gold laid on by a devout Burman is a work of Merit, until the features are lost in the mass of gilding overlaid. There were boxes full of empty photograph books, some very handsome ones. I opened one chest, which was full of feeding-bottles. Everywhere there was a mixture of the tawdry & the splendid, of French imitation & Oriental reality. The number of guns found in and about the palace mounts up to 800, some of them very highly wrought & fantastic in their workmanship. Many of the bronze & iron guns had been gilded. One very holy gun had been consulted as to whether we were to be successful or defeated. They put the muzzle of this golden gun well up, & the crafty soothsayer gave it a bottle of rum. If it stayed down the Burmans were to be victorious; if the gun vomited it up we were to be victorious. I asked the aforementioned English-speaking Burman what the result had been. He declared, quite in good faith, I think, that the gun's abdominal muscles had triumphed over the force of gravity. I asked him how he accounted for so strange an upheaval. He replied, "Surely some Nat (evil spirit) must have done it."

I have not mentioned the White Elephant. Poor fellow! he was a fraud as regards his complexion; but he was very holy, nevertheless, much too holy to live where Gautama had been dethroned, and after having endured the Xtian raj for 10 days he yielded up his great soul to Gautama, who had given it. To bury him was a big thing, but of that anon. There was another holy infant elephant—the Lord of the Silver Bowls. I came upon one elephant shed in my search rounds, & struck the huge vessels with my stick, passing them as tin. I afterwards heard the title I have applied to the little elephant, & on further investigation found that the

vessels in which his food was cooked were solid silver, & all his drinking utensils of the same.

We found some huge tusks of a former very celebrated White Elephant. I have had a photograph taken of myself between these two huge tusks, & it is to be sent to the 'Graphic,' and one copy to Sir Victor Brooke. Do you know the photo of him with one huge tusk? I am rather in hopes that my tusks are larger.

One tusk weighs	lb. 103
The other	. 98
The bigger measures	ft. 7 . 8
The lesser	ft. 7 . 8½

round the outside of the curve.

My name will not be to the picture, as I barred that, but I thought it would be interesting to have the picture to show Brooke. We found much more ivory. We don't know yet whether all these things will be prize-money. I could have been prize agent, and really had much of the trouble and all the organization, but as the appointment is a lucrative one & rather, I think, beneath the dignity of a General officer, I declined to act.

Although Mandalay had fallen so easily, and the King of Burma was a prisoner in British hands, it need hardly be said that the country had not been conquered, and before the close of the year it became evident that the invading force was likely to have much trouble before matters settled down. In the first place, no one, British or Burman, knew what were the intentions of the British Government; and this in itself was enough to prevent the establishment of order. White, who was now about to take command at Mandalay, General Prendergast being en-

gaged in a further expedition up the river to Bhamo, saw very clearly what the consequences of this uncertainty must be. He had seen similar conditions elsewhere, and he writes to his wife :—

MANDALAY, 20*th Decr.* 85.

I see Lord Dufferin is expected here end of January. This country will remain in a ferment until its future is settled. I fear Lord D.'s visit means that nothing will be done till then. The people are now afraid to side with us beyond the walls of Mandalay. They say—as the Jagis said in the Kurram Valley, as the Afghans said in Kabul, as the Kandaharis said in Southern Afghanistan, as the Arabs of the Bayuda said on the Upper Nile, & as the Hadendowas said at Suakim,—"If you will assure us that you will stay with us we will throw in our lot with you, but our throats will be cut if we do so & you go away."

Then the fall of Mandalay had set free large numbers of disbanded soldiery, who having now no master and no pay, naturally turned to plunder for a living, and began to make attacks on British sentries and posts. The Chief Commissioner of British Burma, Charles Bernard, one of the most upright and capable men who ever served the Indian Government, had come up to Mandalay; but pending orders from England it was impossible for him to make any effective arrangements. The first thing necessary was that the British Government should make up its mind what it wanted to do with the country; and in the meantime the state of things was likely to get worse, for the districts round Mandalay were covered with jungle and practically without roads, nor had the

British force at the capital any land transport. The Burmans, therefore, could harass it almost with impunity, sure that it was incapable of rapid movement in pursuit. The Burmese Ministers, who were supposed to be provisionally governing the country for us, were either incompetent to do so or treacherous—probably both. The fact was that the very rapidity and completeness of the initial success had proved an embarrassment to the British Government. This has often been the case in India. As Lyall puts it,

> when a native army has been fairly beaten in the field, the warlike spirit of the population is quelled, and in a manner satisfied. When the soldiers are disbanded, but not decisively defeated, they scatter over the country and rally the elements of resistance.

It is much better to have hard fighting and inflict heavy loss, even if in doing so serious loss be incurred. In the end there is less bloodshed. I notice from White's diary that the very day he took command at Mandalay, the 21st December, he had to send out small columns in various directions; and he states in a later paper that in December 1885

> hostile bands numbering hundreds, or even thousands, were round Mandalay within sight of its walls, and were ravaging the central districts.

The same sort of thing went on throughout January 1886, Burmese "dacoits"[1] raiding the country in all directions, pursued with difficulty by small British columns deficient in transport; and when early in

[1] Dacoits are gang robbers.

February Lord Dufferin arrived to study in person on the spot the difficulties of the Burmese problem, the state of affairs was as unpromising as it could well be. I was with him as Foreign Secretary, and can remember that at night, as his steamer lay in the river off Mandalay, desultory firing was heard close by. Lord Dufferin was surprised and far from satisfied, but he went into the situation with characteristic thoroughness, personally discussing matters with Sir Frederick Roberts, now Commander-in-Chief in India, who had also come to Mandalay, and with the various civil and military officers concerned; and the result was that, at all events, the doubts regarding the future action of the British Government were effectually removed.

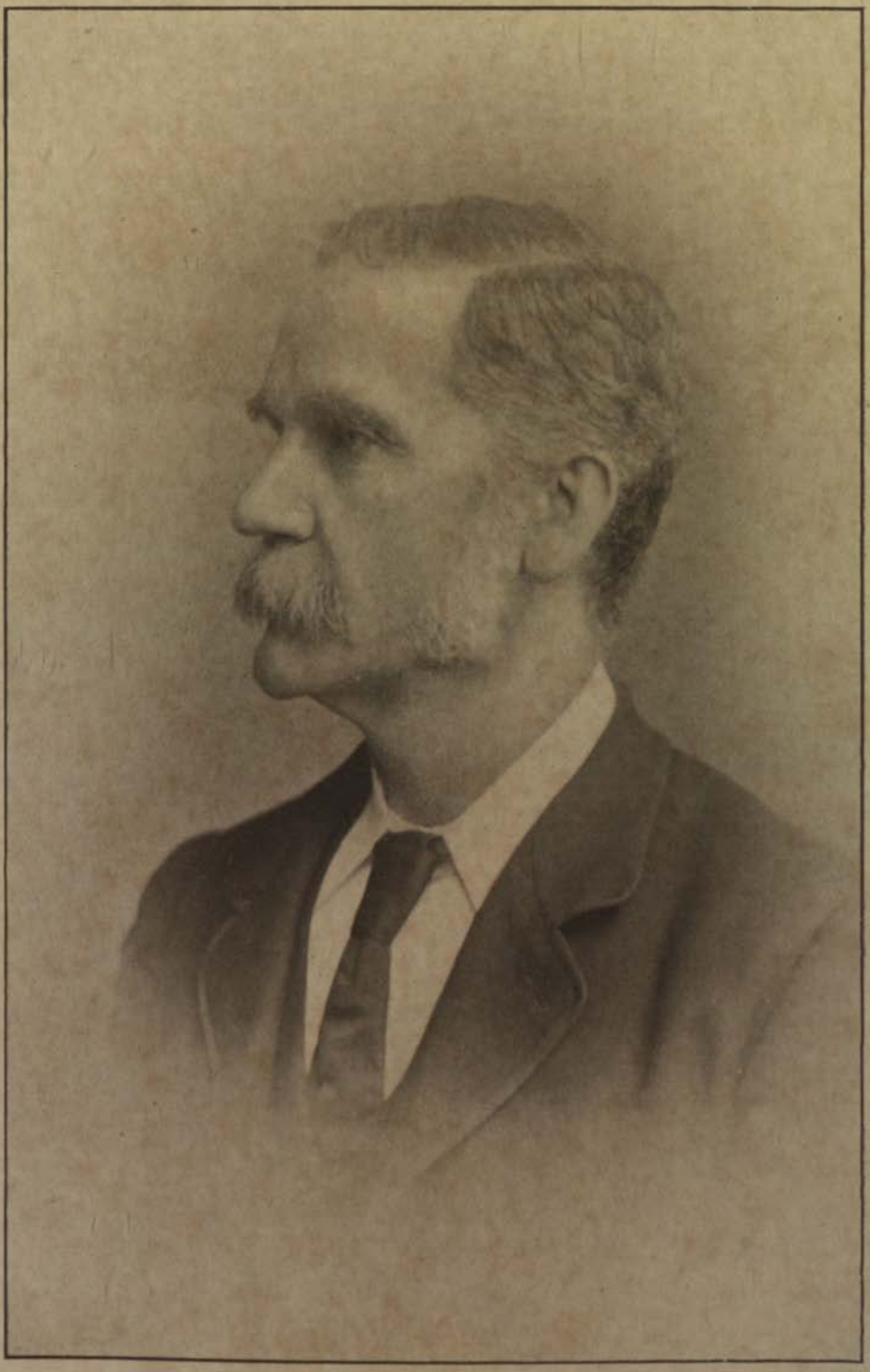
There were several courses open, from the re-establishment of an independent Burmese kingdom, with its foreign relations only under British control, to annexation pure and simple, and the direct administration of Burma by British officers. Lord Dufferin came to the conclusion that although the annexation and administration of a country as large as France was a vast undertaking, this course offered the best prospect of permanent success; and, Her Majesty's Government having accepted that view, the annexation was announced.

White, among others, had been consulted by Lord Dufferin, and had spoken out with a clearness which much impressed his fellow-Ulsterman. It is curious to find that while the diplomat Viceroy was from the first inclined to favour annexation, the soldier was

against it. White thought that it would tend to make us distrusted, and also perhaps involve trouble with China. His arguments showed a coolness and breadth of view which one would hardly have looked for in a purely regimental officer. But his opinion did not prevail.

Lord Dufferin used afterwards to tell a story about White which is worth repeating. He had naturally been anxious that the country should settle down as soon as possible, and some of the reports brought to him about future prospects had been sanguine enough. Walking with White one day at Mandalay he asked how far British power in Burma now extended. White pointed to a sentry pacing up and down the rampart, and replied, "Up to that man and no farther." He thought that his bluntness had angered Lord Dufferin, and perhaps it had, for the moment. The Viceroy was a quick-tempered man, and Burma was his own special child, in which he had throughout taken the keenest personal interest. But the feeling of annoyance certainly did not last. No man more thoroughly appreciated courage and honesty. Many years afterwards he referred to the incident in a public speech, and said that White's frankness had been of great service to him.

Before the Viceroy's party left Mandalay all had been put in train for the organisation of the new government. Charles Bernard, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, was now to be the civil ruler of the new province as well; and White was to remain at Mandalay in command of the Upper



SIR CHARLES BERNARD, K.C.S.I.

Burma Field Force, which was in reality the only British power in the country. General Prendergast was to have command of all the troops in both Upper and Lower Burma, with headquarters at Rangoon. Gradually a force of military police was to be raised in India and handed over to civil officers, who were to administer the various districts of Upper Burma, so as to set free as many as possible of the troops; but this would of course take time. Meanwhile the troops would have to bring the country into order, and it was evident that White's duty would be a difficult one, for the rainy season was approaching, and until the following cold weather it would be inadvisable for fear of sickness to increase the number of troops in the field.

The following letters, from the beginning of the year 1886 to the date when he entered upon his responsible command, give some idea of his life at this time, and of his views :—

To Mrs White.

3rd Jany. 1886.

The first day I was in command the fun commenced. A cavalry party sent down to escort telegraph people was attacked by Burmans and beaten back with some loss. I sent a party to support the cavalry sharp; in fact from the 21st Decr. up I have fought several campaigns. Howls of hysterical fright from the European population of Mandalay,[1] who, according to their own accounts, are all to be murdered

[1] A considerable number of needy Europeans of various nations had drifted out to Burma, as they generally do to the capital of any Asiatic country. The Græculus esuriens is found all over Asia.

every night, disturb my rest at night and my work by day. I have, I think, met every requirement & only lost my temper once, the boss that rose it thinking me worse than the dacoits. The accounts are most exaggerated. I went through the worst suburbs of the town last night, and stayed in them from 11 till 1, & there was not a move. No doubt the papers will be full of alarming reports. Mr Bernard and I work very well together. We have had risings in every direction to meet, & I think we have shown energy and precision in hitting the right points. At present, though this is the day of rest, I have four parties all actually fighting this morning, & I am very anxious to know the result.

Bernard gets the information, tells me of the combinations against us, and the threatened points, & then with a Burmese map on my table I try to plan a campaign. So far they have been a success. The country is the most difficult I ever saw or thought of to plan operations in—everywhere water & jungle, both of which defy calculations as to time of march. The natives know nothing of distance, & the country is unsurveyed. We have little or no land transport. I knew when we started this would anchor us, & I may have written it to you. I made no secret of it to others. I told the Quartermaster-General of the Madras Army that he had equipped a force as a fish to fight a dog. It is coming true. . . .

I delight in the work, & have, I think, done all right. It suits me. No routine orders, but absolute power to do or take anything procurable, and meet the requirements of the moment. We hold Mandalay quite sufficiently strongly, and I have not had a moment's uneasiness about it or any of my columns.

I have a reserve ready to act in any direction, & to smash organised opposition anywhere within striking distance. I could cross Burma with it if I had transport, but there I sit down & cry. . . .

On Tuesday last I had a novel experience in warfare. I

commanded two little forces by sending them heliographic messages. The whole plain lay in panorama before & under us, & we could with powerful telescopes actually see the dead falling. I signalled to each giving orders, so that one party played into the hands of the other. I wish I had a prospect of a run home to see you after this is over, but it cannot be, I fear. These organised risings will want a lot of putting down.

To John White.

MANDALAY, 10*th Jany.* 86.

The command of the troops at Mandalay still rests with me. I have 4 different Columns out within a radius of 25 miles of Mandalay. Sir Harry Prendergast ought to be back to-morrow or next day, but he will find nearly everybody attacking dacoits & rebels.

Since our arrival here circumstances have greatly altered, and with them the position of affairs at Mandalay. Our very rapid descent on the Capital, following so close on the heels of our Ultimatum, paralysed the power of resistance which the Hlot-Daw[1] undoubtedly had in reserve, if they had been given time to develop it. As we approached Mandalay, & the Menghyees came to make terms, they one and all said & reiterated, "Give us time, we have not had time to think."

We have since our arrival here found over seven hundred pieces of Ordnance, most of them no doubt of obsolete pattern, but still capable of doing great damage.

The great facilities which the wonderful water-way to Mandalay offered to our advance, combined with the splendid fleet of the Irrawaddy Company, capable of transporting a force of 10,000 men, with stores, over the broad brown bosom of the Irrawaddy up to the very walls of Mandalay, made the task of conquering Upper Burma seem so very simple that other considerations were lost sight of, or, at all events, they

[1] Council of Ministers.

did not receive the attention which the experience of events has now taught us they were worthy of.

Occupy the capital and you have conquered the country. So said the school men, and as the task was easy their aim was rapidly accomplished. But the capture of the capital is generally the final event of a long series, each of which has disheartened the enemy, convinced the enemy's army of its inferiority, and inflicted on it such heavy loss that it looks forward to a cessation of hostilities as a relief.

The case of Upper Burma is far otherwise. The soldier class, which was numerous, was largely employed in occupying the city & a circuit of forts thrown round the city, extending on the eastern side up to the Shan hills. These forts held back the lawless hill-men, who are robbers by inclination & by heritage. It is generally believed that the Tynedah Menghy, the most powerful minister of state, was secretly a patron of dacoits, and swelled his revenue by sharing in their spoils.

These soldiers were, no doubt, badly & irregularly paid; but, in half-civilised countries, the uniform and badge of authority are rarely borne on ill-nourished bodies.

The fall of the reigning dynasty deprived these men of their livelihood. Some gave up their arms & returned to their homes, glad of release from enforced &, I believe, hereditary service. The greater part, however, were thrown upon their military instincts for their bread. Under such circumstances every Burman becomes a phongy (monk) or a dacoit.

At the foot of the hills, where the inroads of the Shans had hitherto been checked by the soldiers of Theebaw, the quondam soldiers held out the hand of fellowship to their former antagonists. The Shans, no longer held in fear by the Royal Army, needed only a place d'armes in the enemy's country to spoil him. They formed alliances with certain villages, & in company with their villagers raided upon the neighbouring towns. A system of this kind, pursued on the

circumference of a large circle where raids can be made on ever-varying points, is hard to put down.

Troops are rapidly despatched, but arrive to find the smouldering embers of last night's fires, & the vacant countenances of the looted villagers, on whom a system of terrorism has been introduced not unworthy of Ireland's uncrowned King. Their plea is an unanswerable one, and I have heard it now in many lands. Amidst the rocks of the Kuram Valley; in the green oases of Kabul; on the sun-steeped sands of the Bayuda; & now over the swamps & jungles of Burma—"Stay with us," they say, "& shield us from the consequences of our partisanship, & we will throw in our lot with you; but it is cruel to compromise us & leave us to our fate."

These & other circumstances attendant on our capture of Mandalay have made its occupation easy, but the maintenance of law & order most difficult.

Wild-looking Burmans, on the active-looking ponies for which the country is celebrated, their long black hair streaming behind them, arrive daily from the North and from the South with one cry: "The dacoits."

It is harrowing to hear of poor villagers thrust out of house & home. I have despatched many columns, & nearly all of the earlier ones inflicted heavy loss. Now, however, the dacoits are more wary. They have also adherents amongst those upon whom we are dependent for information, and the march of our columns is known before they parade. For this kind of warfare, also, celerity of movement is above all things essential. Celerity rests on suitable transport. The Force has none. We are buying such little as the country affords. The expedition was equipped as a fish, and sailed into Mandalay, but now the land dogs are barking and biting all round, & the fish cannot approach them.

With regard to the numerous events that have taken place since I have had the command, I really don't know where to begin. I have had hard work; in fact, all the work of

the army has fallen upon me. Sir Harry Prendergast & General Norman have gone to Bhamo, & General Foord has retired to India. I have one first-class staff officer, Colonel Protheroe. I hope I have done some good. I have a strong conviction that every objective point should be attacked at once, and that the fighting line should be made as strong as possible.

Acting on this principle, I have worked the troops under me very severely, but I have spared neither responsibility nor labor in doing everything in my power to secure their success.

When Prendergast returns he will find things much changed. So far he has written to me most pleasantly, & I am on the happiest terms with Mr Bernard, the Chief Commissioner. He is a man I have the greatest respect for, & is working himself into bad health from his devotion to duty.

The Madras soldiers, too, are learning confidence in themselves from the strong parties that I have worked them in.

It is a mistake to suppose that these people were anxiously awaiting annexation. The more I see & hear, the more convinced I am that they are very loyal, in their easy-going way, to the house of Alompra. The standard of Royalty, no matter where raised, attracts many adherents. The Ministers who delivered Theebaw into our hands are now threatening to resign if they are not given another prince. There is something more than mere political feeling in this. Their King was defender of the Faith, & with him falls much of the alms-giving upon which the Phoongyees, the scholars of the country, existed, and much of the splendour of religious ceremonial & fete in which the Burmans both male and female revel. We have tried to substitute our games, & hold weekly race meetings & athletic games; but the higher class of Burmans stand haughtily apart & never put in an appearance. I asked a Menghy why it was. His answer was interpreted, "Oh! the people are not yet happy."

The mercantile class in Rangoon have cried out for annexa-

tion as the surest road to advanced profits in their trade. I am against annexation, for two strong reasons.

1st. We have sacrificed much of late to establish confidence amongst our neighbours & feudatories that we no longer wish to remove our neighbour's landmark. The annexation of Burma would reawaken their slumbering suspicions.

2nd. In annexing Burma we march with China at Bhamo. It has been said that China advances claims to Bhamo, which is now garrisoned by British soldiers—the usual handful. China may have been squared for the present, but after conquering some 30 or 40 thousand Frenchmen she will be very confident & have hordes of men set free to act elsewhere. . . . It will be most disastrous to us to fight China. She is our best ally in the East against the aggression of Russia.

I must, however, own that I do not see how Government is to be carried on in a protected state. We have already found that we cannot trust the Menghyees. They sit in Council, & ape the tricks of other ministries. They pass resolutions, & threaten to resign if not granted "home rule." But the district over which they preside is the most disturbed in the country. Our annexation must be followed by a rain of district officers all over the country, civilians whose courts must be hedged in by British bayonets for a long time to come.

On this point I have to-night sent a long telegram to Govt. of India pointing out that much military action is still required, that the troops are now overworked, & that the season for operations is short. I expect to be snubbed, but I have done what I think right. Good-bye now; send this round the family. I cannot write more. The news all round to-day has been very sad—officers cut down, one civilian murdered.

With regard to the death of the doctor & the dangerous wounds of Lt. Armstrong, I had given special orders that a mule battery passing from the ships to Sagaing fort should be protected by infantry, even though it was only a couple

of hundred yards. The battery got safely in, but 3 officers then walked from the fort to the ships, & were attacked & cut down. I have had 2 officers killed & 2 wounded at Sagaing in the last 10 days. It is a post of only 2 Companies. . . .

To his daughter.

MANDALAY, 17*th Jany.* 1886.

I am writing this in a house all covered with gold leaf like the gilt edges of a book. It looks very grand at night, quite like a fairy house.[1] A great many of the men here are Monks and don't do any work They all wear long yellow robes & carry a great big pot in their hands. They never ask for anything, but they stop outside a door & the people come out & put a spoonful of rice into the pot, & then the Monk goes on to another house. They never say "thank you," because the people think it is a work of Merit to feed them, & the Monks, who are called Phoongyees, are not a bit grateful. Everybody smokes in this country, & you often see a little native child with a great big cigar in its mouth. . . .

To Mrs White.

MANDALAY, 14*th Feby.* 86.

I am rather a nervous worker when I am hustled about trifles. When the work is something big I calm down. But post day is often on me before I know of it. Sunday is usually a day of rest. This is Sunday, & I have spent it thus. At 5.30 I was out of bed & wrote a minute about an expedition rendered necessary by a telegram received last night; at 6.30 I was in the saddle with Sir Frederick Roberts going round everywhere; at 20 minutes to 10 we came back, & I had to tub, shave, & breakfast; at 10.30 I had to receive Lady Dufferin & to show Her Ex. where to sit in Church, or rather where to sit in the Grand Entrance of the Palace

[1] White's quarters were in King Thebaw's palace.

where service is read. I had two gold chairs all ready, but the Viceroy did not turn up. About 11.30 Church was over, & I had all my work to do & to arrange for a levee to-morrow. I had then an hour's talk with Sir Fredk. Roberts about the future occupation of Burma. Had immediately afterwards to arrange the details of an expedition to start to-morrow morning to fight a Pretender. While doing this a telegram is put into my hand from the politicals saying that at Prome, in Lower Burma, news has been received that the Palace is to be burnt down to-morrow or the 16th, & a general rising to take place. As the Viceroy comes in to-morrow to the Palace, I have turned the hundreds of Burmese workmen out of the Palace who were said to be the people to set fire to the place. I am now writing to you 4.30 P.M., & at 6.30 I have to start to the river-bank to dine with the Viceroy. This means a ride of 4½ miles there, & of course the same distance back, & dining in all the splendour of the Vice-regal Uniforms in my Service-stained breeches (Corduroy) & boots, not altogether unacquainted with the sands of Upper Nubia. However, as my other end is full of details HE will like to know regarding Burma & the Madras Army, I hope my boots will remain unchallenged. I am sitting *en bras de chemise* (is this good French?) in considerable heat. The season is rapidly advancing. I hear I am booked to look after Upper Burma. I have been fighting hard for independent Command, & have spoken very plainly on many subjects, more so than most people would. I have protested against remaining at Mandalay under anybody. Send me to the —— if you like, but let me tackle him my own way & don't trammel me with orders. I think they will probably take me at my word & send me to Bhamo, where we touch the Chinese frontier. This will, I think, be about half a degree better than Thani or Debbah, but I am quite willing to try it as they want me. I owe Sir Fred. my present position & am bound to follow his wishes. . . .

The Viceroy's State Entry went off to perfection. It was

left entirely to me, & I did all I could to make it a success, & not to disgrace dear old Lord Ripon's Milty. Secretary. It went off without a hitch, & Lord Dufferin sent for me & thanked me most warmly. I replied that if His Ex. thought the arrangements good, I was amply repaid for any trouble I had had on them. He repeated in his slow, rather forced manner, "Good! they were more than good, they were ideal—they were dramatic." . . .

Lord Roberts is looking so young, and so are all his staff except Chapman,[1] who is looking very wretched. I fear he cannot last in office as Quartermaster-General. Neville Chamberlain,[2] Pole-Carew,[3] Bill Beresford,[4] Mr Mackenzie,[5] Morty Durand, are all looking well. Bill is decidedly older. Charley Muir[6] as nice as ever. . . .

I have just come from a Council of war, at which the affairs of Upper Burma have been settled off hand. To me has fallen the very important Command at Mandalay. After all, I believe it pays best to be very firm in the stand you make, & to take up your position at once. I was on the point of drifting into the second place at Mandalay. It *ought* to be the head quarters, & I boldly said so, and also that when made the head quarters of the Army, it was no place for me. I prepared the case carefully beforehand, & my arguments told. The cards were then reshuffled, and the head quarters located at Rangoon. This was against my advice on public grounds, but in accord with my private wishes. I shall have an immense amount of work, but I hope to have able Staff Officers to help me. The arrangement is only to stand till November, so I hope we may be

[1] Now General Sir Edward Chapman, K.C.B., R.A.

[2] Now Colonel Sir Neville Chamberlain, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., Inspector-General Royal Irish Constabulary.

[3] Now Lieut.-General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, K.C.B., C.V.O., M.P.

[4] Colonel Lord William Beresford, V.C.

[5] Afterwards Sir Alexander Mackenzie, K.C.S.I., Home Secretary to the Government of India.

[6] Now Colonel Charles Muir, C.B., C.I.E.

together again nearly as soon as would have been possible under the old conditions. If I do well, I ought to be a Major-General before my 55th birthday. I dined last night with the Viceroy. . . . I had a long talk with Lord Dufferin in his private study after dinner. I think we got on well & our views coincided. He is evidently bent on making this a great success, & does not want to be restricted by expense. I was very keen on this point also. He is, I think, very able, very earnest, & takes more of a Palmerstonian view of England's position than Lord Ripon. . . .

To Mrs White.

MANDALAY, 22*nd Feby.* 86.

On Wednesday I had a ride with Sir Fred. Roberts by his invitation, & much conversation. He seems very brisk & well, & was very kind in all he said & did to me. On Wednesday evening we had a State dinner as far as circumstances would permit. The Viceroy announced unconditional annexation. He came over to me after dinner & had another talk. I told him we had not enough troops in the country to protect those who had a right to look to us for protection. He was quite angry, I think, & said rather brusquely for him, "You are the first person in an official position who has told me that." I replied, "I have seen more of the sickening failures in this respect in other countries than any other official here" . . .

To his daughter.

MANDALAY, 28*th February* 1886.

Some time ago you wrote me a letter about the pony at Whitehall, and you have since sent me a nice sachet. so I will tell you what happened to me yesterday. I was out riding a great big horse belonging to the Chief Commissioner of Burma. I met a lot of young officers having a paper chase. This is the way they do it. Two officers fill their pillow-

cases full of little bits of torn paper and away they ride. They are the foxes, and the paper which they scatter as they go is the scent. The rest of the officers give the foxes 5 minutes' start, & then try to catch them by following the paper. The foxes scatter the paper as fast as they can, but it delays them. They always go over all the jumps to be found, so I rode along to see the fun, & soon found myself barking like the other hounds & chasing the foxes. In one place my horse made a great big jump & landed in a bog. He sprained his ankle, and there he is in the stable to-day as lame as a tree. What will Chief Commissioner say now? "Catch me leaving my horse with General White again." But I hope the horse will be quite well again soon.

This is King Theebaw's own paper. I had three sheets, but I gave two sheets to Lady Dufferin, who is the wife of the Viceroy, and here is the third for my little girl. The peacock is the emblem of Burmese royalty.

While I was writing this letter to you I got one myself in Burmese; here it is for you. It says that we are all to be burnt to death to-night & killed again next week. . . .

There was a great big fire in Mandalay a few days ago, & many poor people had their houses burnt. They never appear to care. The men sit down & look on, & the ladies take a cigar out of their back hairs, where they carry them, and smoke away happily. One English police officer saw the owner of a house sitting down smoking while his house was on fire. Policeman gave him a box on the ear & said, "Hulloa! Johnny Burman, that is your house, why don't you put out the fire?" Johnny Burman said, "It is bad enough to have one's house burnt without having to put the fire out also." . . .

To Mrs White.

H.M. Indian Marine Ship,
"Sir William Peel," 19*th March* 86.

Mr Bernard is now at Mandalay, and a few nights ago,

after I had got into bed, he came into my room & said he had had a rather important telegram. As I get, & read of his, several important telegrams every day, I was not much excited, but was not a little surprised to learn that Sir H. Prendergast's extension of service had been refused by the Secy. of State, & that the Commands in Burma were to be reconstituted; that I was to command in Upper Burma & to have two Brigr.-Generals under me, and that it was still to be considered a force in the field reporting direct to the Commander-in-Chief in India. All this is, of course, an extraordinarily high post to put me in, and promotion far above what I have merited. It was also said in the telegram that the Secy. of State has been asked to give me the local rank of Major-General. If this is granted, & I succeed in exercising this Command without bringing disaster on the State, I shall have a strong claim to be confirmed in the rank next November, when it is anticipated the country will be more settled, & when the new levies of police now being raised in the Punjab for service in Burma will be ready to replace some of the regiments now here. . . .

The command was in fact a high tribute to White's reputation. He was a very junior Colonel in the army, and, as he said, "I am and must for long continue to be the junior Brigadier in the country." Yet he was selected for the charge, and taking it over at the end of March, he soon had 15,000 troops under him. Till then he had been mainly engaged in reducing to order the central districts near the capital. He was now to set to work on the whole country.

CHAPTER XXI.

PACIFICATION OF BURMA.

1886-1888.

For the next two years White had to face hard and harassing work, mostly in a bad climate, with continued separation from his wife and children. But it was fine work, the breaking-in of a new country, and though it involved much toil and responsibility, it brought him rapidly increasing power and reputation. It was also of great service to him as a training for the highest commands in future. To be successful the General commanding in Upper Burma required to possess diplomatic qualities, for his work brought him into perpetual contact with the civil officers who were organising the administration of the country; and he had to study their point of view, often very different from the point of view of a soldier, to meet their requirements as far as possible, and to keep on friendly terms with them. This was perhaps all the more difficult, because as time went on it was his business to co-operate in the gradual transfer of control from the military to the civil

power, so that in the end the troops should be almost wholly withdrawn, and the country left to the civilian alone. Fortunately White found in two successive Chief Commissioners, Charles Bernard and Charles Crosthwaite, of the Indian Civil Service, exceptionally upright and able men who met him half-way and did their utmost to avoid friction, while teaching him many useful lessons in civil administration. Yet it speaks well for his tact and good temper, as well as theirs, that he remained throughout on such excellent terms with them and their subordinates.

During the first of the two years the work of restoring order and introducing a settled government was specially arduous, but White and Bernard had been sympathetic from the beginning, and their sympathy soon ripened into a warm friendship, which was never broken or impaired. Together they did great service to their country, and the one who received full credit for it always appreciated the character and conduct of the other, who received for his part little but slander and blame.

It would serve no useful purpose to describe in detail here the measures taken by Bernard and White for the pacification of Burma. I would only ask the reader to remember that it was a country of vast extent, far larger than Great Britain, covered in many parts with dense jungle, pierced but also intersected by broad rivers, and inhabited by a population accustomed to disorder of all kinds. To foment disorder there were swarms of disbanded soldiery, and numberless pretenders claiming descent from the Burmese

royal family, who could always gather a following of some kind. There were also many wild tribes which had never in reality been subdued by the Burmese kings. The task of reducing such a country to order was not an easy one. The best way of showing White's share in it, and the circumstances in which his work was done, is to let him, as far as possible, speak for himself. The following are some extracts from his letters:—

To Miss Jane White.

11th April 86.

The papers will tell you all about Burma. The country is still very disturbed, & I am fighting in all directions. It scarcely deserves to be dignified by so grand a name, as these foolish Burmese, altho' they turn out and defy us & burn & loot the villages that have sided with us, invariably run away when they are faced by our troops. . . . I have a very large country under my command, & as it is not provided with roads and telegraph lines it is very difficult to keep up communication with the different posts. I am now endeavouring to throw six to eight months' supplies into all the inland posts, as communication will be quite cut off in the rains.

To Mrs White.

26th April.

Papers will tell you I have had some cause for anxiety on public as well as private grounds. I have twice saved the Palace by the skin of my teeth from being burned down. . . . I have been taken quite aback by the energy developed by the organisation against us in the country everywhere. . . . The new year[1] has been talked of for a long time as likely to be a lively time; it has turned out to be so. The outposts have been attacked everywhere, and there has been one con-

[1] 1st April.

tinued cry for reinforcements. You will be happy and bright now, and the weather ought to be real summer when this reaches you. It has a genial summer feel here—100° in the Palace,—& takes something out of one, up half the night at fires, & at work again at 5 A.M. This command is, of course, becoming a very large one.[1] I have just finished three sheets of foolscap to Sir F. Roberts. I am rather afraid he may think I have too little experience for such a command, & had intended writing that he might pass me over if he thought it right, & that I would be delighted to serve under the man of his choice, but it did not come nicely on the paper, so I have not done it. . . .

I must close this. By the time it reaches you . . . I hope, too, we may have had a little rain or something to alleviate the very great heat here.

27 per cent of the 67th regiment in hospital, and more going in. Officers rapidly breaking down.

Funny people the Burmans. Last week here two policemen had a dispute. A said to B, "I am braver than you." B denied it. A to B, "Will you stand a shot to show you are brave?" B to A, "Yes." A to B, "Bang." B falls dead. A is arrested, & remonstrates, saying, "B consented to stand a shot, only his Charm wasn't good enough to save his life." . . .

The "three sheets of foolscap to Sir F. Roberts" are not among the numerous letters from White which Lord Roberts kindly placed at my disposal for the purposes of this memoir, but I have no doubt that they were as full of careful detail, and were as carefully answered, as all the letters which have been preserved. Though well acquainted with the powers of work of both writers, I have been astonished at the volume of their correspondence on Burmese affairs, and

[1] Another brigade was being sent to him.

at the laborious minuteness with which every point was worked out.

In the course of this month, April 1886, White learned that he had been given the local rank of Major-General, and that Sir Frederick was trying to get him the substantive rank — which was a matter for the Horse Guards.

On the 30th April he writes to his wife :—

I have just come in from a tour of a large area of the town, a mass of burning embers, the poor people sitting on their boxes or charpoys[1] smoking cheroots and cracking jokes. It is a most depressing sight now to go out—everywhere wide areas of charred remains, here a brick wall blackened, there a fire-blasted tree, the only remnants of what was a month ago a thickly peopled town. . . . Every year these reckless Burmans burnt down half the town. In the days of the Kings of Burma the strictest laws were enforced. It is even said that one of the precautions against fire was to fling the owner of the first house that caught fire into the flames. . . . One thing I have satisfaction in. When we first arrived a fire was the signal for general robbery. Now the troops are at corners, and we shoot down any dacoits trying on that game.

Last week I heard of several leaders and united gangs at a village called Tadeinche, about 12 miles from this. I tried a new plan, & ordered the few cavalry I have to charge straight through the village, & ignore the small fry running away, & to gallop on to the head of the lot. From frequent experiences I have learnt that the Bows[2] bolt early and leave their followers to fight and cover their retreat. This manœuvre had a good effect, & I captured a lot of dacoits, and amongst them several influential leaders. . . .

[1] Chahar pai, four legs—a bedstead.

[2] Bo=leader.

I have just been down to see the arrangements to send off about 90 British soldiers by river steamer and flat. . . . The change . . . gives the poor fellows a chance of life. With dysentery & fever it is hard to pull up in a hospital varying from 100° to 104°.

To John White.

15th May.

The resistance to our authority is much more persistent than I had anticipated. I have worked the men very hard indeed—much too hard for their health, & have been down on organised bands whenever they came within reach by road or river, but they rise again very soon after they are dispersed. If I am left in command next winter—my appointment is only till November—I will ask for several cavalry regiments, and try to hunt down the Bohs or leaders. I have but one regiment of cavalry, & they have been knocked to pieces by the hard work they have bad. They have now the greatest confidence in themselves, and will go at any number of Burmans. . . .

In the extreme north, at Bhamo, we have a more bitter enemy in the Kachins, with whom we have had a breach, and who beat us back. . . .

Bernard, the Chief Commissioner, is away on tour, and I have the chief political responsibility as well as the whole military work at present.

The men are breaking down very fast, . . . but what I am most afraid of is an outbreak of cholera at Mandalay. One regiment en route to Mandalay has had it badly, and lost over 40 men already.

To Mrs White.

15th May 1866.

I live in Theebaw's Royal apartment. Worse luck, it has a flat roof, that flat roof is covered with Portland Cement, that Portland Cement is full of cracks; about three nights

ago rain came down in torrents. My rooms—I have one big one & two little ones—were flooded. I walked about trying to put my papers in a dry place, but failing, I resigned the papers to become papier mâché, put my India rubber tub over my mosquito curtain frame at the upper end, rolled myself, perspiring properly, in the blanket you bought for me, & went to sleep; awoke, very wet & slightly chilled, took quinine, & viewed the desolation around. My most cherished books of reference, wet rags. My maps, corrected by the latest surveys in red paint, etc., were masses of red & blue blotches, & the mosquitoes more nippy than ever.

Under these conditions, not pleasant in the palace at Mandalay, very much less so in the open, our troops in small detachments were everywhere hunting down "dacoits," and breaking up bands of insurgents who for the most part would not stand long enough to be severely punished, but laid ambushes and stalked sentries, giving infinite trouble to the soldiers, who suffered much from sickness due to exposure and overwork. The general plan of campaign was to work up the two great rivers, the Irawadi and Chindwin, which ran from north to south through the cultivated districts of Burma, and gradually to get a firm grip of the country on both banks by establishing military posts which could support each other. White himself was constantly out superintending the work of placing the posts, and directing the march of columns in all directions.

The coming of the rainy season, though it was trying to the troops, had one advantage, that it decreased the risk of fires, and this was a matter of real importance, for if the blocks of buildings

which composed the palace had gone, there would have been much difficulty in finding quarters for the Mandalay garrison.

By the 19th of May White had nearly 20,000 men under his orders, a fine command for a man who was still a colonel of little more than a year's standing. And though he thought little of the Burman as an enemy, there was constant fighting at one point or another. A month later the force under his command had fought over ninety actions in which there had been killed or wounded. The loss among our troops in these actions had, it is true, been small, but they had lost heavily from sickness. During the month of May alone, 182 British soldiers had been sent away from Burma, broken down by the climate, and the Indian soldiers also suffered severely.

So far White himself had stood the climate fairly well, though he disliked it. Mandalay at this season was "very steamy, and the ground a mass of mud," while his incessant work prevented his getting much exercise, which always tried him. Also he found that the constant reading and writing had strained his eyes, and that he had to wear glasses at night. This was hardly surprising, as he was over fifty, but it troubled him. Altogether he was, he wrote, feeling "played out," and had actually one morning lain in bed till after seven o'clock—a piece of "laziness" for which he reproached himself. He usually got up at daylight.

So the summer wore on, scarcely a day passing without news of fighting somewhere, and occasionally

with loss. Now a young civil officer murdered, now a captain of native infantry shot dead in heading an advance, now ten sepoys wounded by dacoits getting under the raised floor of the house in which the men were sleeping; then perhaps a satisfactory attack by our troops upon a band of 3000 dacoits plundering a village, with nearly a hundred of the enemy killed and many prisoners; but always vigilance and hard work and exposure, officers and men breaking down with fever or dysentery, the over-driven Chief Commissioner looking ill and haggard, White's aide-de-camp, Agnew, invalided and sent away,[1] White himself "seedy and down" with liver from the moist heat, but trying to solace himself with the thought of bluebells and primroses at home "in two or three years."

Among the matters which at this time occupied his attention was the raising of a force of Mounted Infantry. It was very desirable in dealing with so elusive an enemy as the Burmans that our troops should be quick in movement. It was also very desirable to spare them all unnecessary fatigue. Cavalry was an expensive arm, more especially because the Burmese climate was deadly to imported horses. White wished, therefore, to have a force of infantry mounted on country ponies, which could stand the climate and were very enduring. For the

[1] Captain, now Colonel, Quentin Agnew, served with White as A.D.C., and afterwards as Military Secretary, for several years. Always keen and cheery, he was an invaluable member of the household. Even the worst day of a depressing rainy season was to him only "another jolly wet day, just like England."

command of the force he wanted an officer of special qualifications, Penn Symons,[1] who was well known to him. He writes to Sir Frederick Roberts:—

MANDALAY, 31*st July* 86.

With a view to pressing on the organization of the Mounted Infantry, I would much like to have an able & energetic officer as Director or Inspector-General. If I could get Symons he would be invaluable to me. I would give him command occasionally in exceptionally important "dawrs,"[2] & his regular work would be to organize & inspect Mounted Infantry. He has the health & strength of will for the work to a degree that I do not know where to look for elsewhere. I know how valuable his services are where he is, but I submit it to Your Excellency they would be still more so here. He is a horseman, a shikari, no unimportant fact in the work before us; has hunted the jungles of Burma, and has by nature & habit the power of command. He would get more out of tired men than any officer I know, & has great endurance himself.

Penn Symons was sent to White accordingly, and did excellent work, not only in organising the Mounted Infantry, but in other important posts. The two men were afterwards to be closely connected in campaigns very distant from Burma.

On the 14th of August White writes to General Chesney, who had now become military member of Council in India:—

MANDALAY, 14*th August* 86.

The country has not settled down under us, as we were led to think it would; but, at the same time, it is as far from

[1] Afterwards Major-General Sir William Penn Symons, killed in the first battle of the Boer war, 1899.

[2] "Runs"—*i.e.*, raids, expeditions.

being in the state described. We have had to reconquer the country, & I think we have pacified it within the margin of our occupation as far as it is yet possible to do so. Wherever there has been an objective we have gone at it & broken it up for the time. Dacoity is a local institution, & has been long rife here, & it will be long before the smaller bands in out of the way districts give up their predatory habits. The Dacoit is not a social outcast. He is looked upon as a bold fellow, & stands high socially. I am told that all the heroes of Burmese story are successful dacoits. The difficulty of securing the leaders is very great. It is evidently much against the instincts of the Burmese, as it is against the feelings of the Irish, to turn informers. It is only by a close & continued occupation that the necessary confidence will be begotten to lead up to the people helping us. I have been trying to extend a system of friendlies which has been worked with considerable success by one or two of the district officers. . . .

Could you do something to secure a fairer account of what we are doing in Burma being given to the public both in England & India? . . .

Many thanks for saying that you have confidence in my work. I think I have done all that was possible to do, but my thinking so may be the measure of my incapacity. Mr Moylan has it that Sir H. Macpherson is coming here to command. I have no right to look forward to the sole & separate Command of a force that has reached the dimensions that I now know this is to have. I have picked (up?) some local experience, & it shall be at the service of the man in chief command, be he Macpherson, Wood, or Brackenbury, the three I have seen mentioned. When next you write you will be in possession of more of what has been done, & I would be very glad if you can still approve.

The 'Times' correspondent was right. Sir Herbert Macpherson, White's old chief, had now become Com-

mander-in-Chief of Madras; and as the Government of India had decided to send a large number of additional troops to Burma during the cold weather, it was thought desirable that the whole force should now be under his command. White was, however, to retain the command in Upper Burma, and was assured that the authorities were thoroughly satisfied with the way he had done his work. The only difference to him—a great difference—was that he was no longer to be under the direct orders of Sir Frederick Roberts. White would, of course, have preferred the continuance of the former arrangement; but it had from the first been provisional, until the cold weather, and he felt that he had no ground for complaint. He writes to Sir Frederick Roberts on the 21st August:—

I received your Excellency's very kind letter of the 4th instant, yesterday. I am most grateful for what you have done & tried to do for me, & there is no point that I am so anxious about as that of not discrediting your selection. I am more than satisfied with the arrangements made, which leave me in a position far above anything I have a right to expect. If your Excellency's orders are to come to me through a senior, I know no one under whom it will be easier and pleasanter to serve than Sir Herbert Macpherson.

His letter then goes on to give an account of the bursting of the great dam at Mandalay and the consequent inundations. White always enjoyed the merriness of the Burmese, which is very un-Indian.

The most remarkable feature of the affair was the philosophical & cheerful demeanour of the people. No lamenta-

tion or mourning, altho' the losses of property must have been great. The raised roadways, yesterday crowded with carts & foot-passengers, became the waterways of to-day, & were choked with boats & rafts of every form & size, from the War-boat of Theebaw to the wooden tub of his successors. Those who walked yesterday waded up to their shoulders in water, & to all outward appearance their only extra care was anxiety to keep their cheroots alight. Mothers dragged their babies middle-deep in water or propelled them in front of them on logs, & the babies laughed at the fun & kicked. If one had suddenly awoke in the midst of the scene the question would have occurred, "Is this a calamity or a carnival?" & the carnival would have had it. The lean dogs on the floating wreckage appeared to me the sole mourners. They alone were depressed & whined.

Sir Herbert Macpherson came over from Madras to Burma in September 1886, and White went down the river to receive him at the frontier. The news of his arrival drew from the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, a characteristically kind and thoughtful letter, of which the following is an extract:—

SIMLA,
Septr. 16*th* 1886.

MY DEAR WHITE,—

Now that the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army has reached Burma, I think it well to let you know that from first to last both I and my colleagues have been entirely satisfied with the manner in which you have discharged the arduous and responsible duties which were confided to you. Sir Frederick Roberts told me that he had every confidence in you as a soldier, and all that I heard of you led me to believe that we should find you equally efficient outside of your official military duties, which, in the position you held, was a matter of almost as great importance. These anticipations

have been fully justified. Sir Frederick Roberts has been good enough to send me the letters you have written to him during the past months, and I have been struck by their ability, modesty, and good sense.

The letter, which runs into three sheets of autograph, reviews with strong approval the details of White's work, and closes with the following postscript :—

P.S.—You may depend upon my doing my best to obtain for you either your rank of Major-General or a K.C.B. I think you are fully entitled to one or the other. I have been much vexed at the long delay in the issue of the Burmese honours, and, I may add, by the way in which the lists we sent in were cut down by the authorities at home. Please, however, consider this postscript as absolutely confidential.

White, of course, did so, not repeating it even to his wife, which would have pleased Lord Dufferin if he had known. There was nothing he appreciated more than exact attention to a request of this kind.

The Major-Generalship was not granted. It would have meant putting White, as he was told, "over pages of Colonels, including some *very* good men," and reluctance to do this was not unnatural, as he recognised.

Macpherson was not destined to hold his command many weeks. On the 24th October White writes to his brother :—

You will have seen poor Sir Herbert's death in the paper ere this. He could not stand this infernal climate, & his heart was too strong for his body. . . . I was very sorry, as

we have soldiered together in many different situations. He was my Brigadier when I first held temporary command of the 92nd at Mooltan. He was with me in the hottest corner of the fight at Kandahar, and was as collected as possible.

Macpherson was one of the many fine soldiers whom Scotland has sent to India. A braver and cooler man when matters were going badly it would have been hard to find, and his death was a real loss to the Indian Army.

One of White's best Brigade commanders—he now had six of them, all good—was another Scotsman, William Lockhart, who, like White, afterwards rose to be Commander-in-Chief in India. A man of singularly fine presence, and the most delightful of companions, Lockhart was at times inclined to be impatient with civilian views, and he had not altogether hit it off with the Chief Commissioner, who seemed to him to show too much tenderness for the people of the country. White had the highest opinion of Lockhart, but he stood up for the civilian against his fellow-soldier.

To Brigadier-General Lockhart.

MANDALAY, 31*st October* 86.

I was sorry to read what you say about Bernard. I do not think you quite realise the position he is in. He acts under the orders of the Govt. of India, and those orders are definite. Great allowances must be made for the position into which the people of the country have in many instances been forced. We have not been able to protect the villagers, and they have been forced into combinations against us. They cannot like having to harbour & feed dacoits. The villagers

have more than once said to our civil officers, "Give us protection and we will throw in our lot with you; but if we are not protected we must make terms with the dacoits." Some of our officers have accepted this necessity, and consented to it. The sincerity of the request for protection is shown by the sacrifice the people are ready to make for it. In many instances they have volunteered to build barracks when want of accommodation has been urged.

The first duty of conquerors is to protect the conquered. After leaving villagers at the mercy of dacoits, who take all they have, we reassert our power spasmodically, drive off the dacoits, and compensate the villagers for their losses by burning their villages. The dacoits go on to the next village and repeat the practice; the villagers are left houseless and destitute. I am not pointing this at you. Mr Gladstone[1] has said that the villages burnt in your late expeditions were dacoit villages; by this I understand that the villagers had of their own free will taken part against us. In this case, I think the destruction of villages is right, and the people will recognise the justice of it. . . .

In conversation with Bernard, the Buddist pope here instanced the burning villages as telling against our sense of justice and as cruel.

If you can get at dacoits, punish and kill as many of them as you can, & lay your plans to cut off the leaders, and Bernard will approve and back your action.

You do not make sufficient allowance for public opinion in England on the treatment of the present crisis. Bernard must not only carry out the orders of Government, but he must also avoid embarrassing that Government by forcing it to defend a line of action repugnant to public opinion. . . .

I could give extracts that would support Bernard's view of the pagoda question you refer to. If it is a danger in a

[1] A civil officer. It may be observed that the burning of a village in Burma was a very different thing from the burning of a village in Europe. A Burmese hut of wood and thatch was easily rebuilt from the neighbouring forest.

military point of view it ought to be pulled down; but the Viceroy has given strict orders to respect religious institutions and buildings. I have written to you at considerable length, as I would be glad to prevent you joining in the outcry against Bernard and his policy, an outcry which in most instances appears to me unjust.

Early in November White went down to Rangoon to meet Sir Frederick Roberts, who, after Macpherson's death, had been asked by Lord Dufferin to go to Burma himself. As White's letter to Lockhart indicates, there had been much discussion in England about the measures taken in Burma, and much disparaging criticism. The majority of Englishmen, with Ireland at their doors, seemed surprised that it had not been found possible to reduce to perfect tranquillity in the course of less than a year a country as large as France, inhabited by a population accustomed for generations to strife and lawlessness—a country, moreover, as Lord Dufferin said, "covered with jungles and swamps, destitute not only of roads but even of paths and the simplest means of communication." Sir Frederick Roberts went to Burma, and did what was possible to accelerate the suppression of disorder; but he was too good a soldier and too just a man not to appreciate the work which had been done. Towards the end of the month he wrote officially from Mandalay:—

The administration of Upper Burma during the present year has been a task of peculiar difficulty, and the marked progress that has been made towards the permanent settlement of the country is mainly owing to the unselfish-

ness, tact, and good sense of the two able officers at the head of affairs. I am glad to have this opportunity of bearing my testimony to the ability and judgment with which Major-General White has carried on the arduous duties connected with his important and widely scattered command, and I trust that it will not be considered out of place if I express my respect and admiration for Sir Charles Bernard, who by his hearty co-operation with the general officer in command has shown how fully he appreciates the many and varied military requirements of the situation.

Bernard had, I believe, wished as a young man to go into the army, but his wish had been overruled. "A good soldier lost to the service," Sir Frederick Roberts said.

A few days earlier, with the thoughtfulness which has endeared him to so many of his countrymen and countrywomen, Sir Frederick had written to Mrs White :—

I think you will like to have a letter from me to hear about your husband. He met me at Rangoon on the 9th inst., and I was delighted to find him looking so well, much better and stronger than I have seen him for a long time. I really hardly expected this, as he had an anxious time, and been hard worked.

Of course *you* knew he would do well, and so did *I*, but it would delight you to hear how well *everyone* speaks of him. There is but one opinion. This will help to cheer you up and console you for the long separation. I wish I could tell you when the war is likely to be over, but it is impossible at present to offer an opinion. By the end of the cold weather no doubt affairs will be very different to what they are now, but it will be necessary to keep an Army here for some time to come, and I don't know any one so well fitted as your husband to command. . . .

General Chesney, the Indian Minister for War, wrote to Mrs White a little later in similar terms—expressing his strong sense of the admirable way in which White was carrying out his work, and saying he was "very glad on all accounts public and private that it should be in such good hands."

Early in December 1886 White learnt that his work had been recognised, and that he had been made a Knight of the Bath. He would greatly have preferred the rank of Major-General, for he could never get over the fear of being forced to retire at fifty-five as a Colonel; but he was pleased at the idea of his wife being Lady White. He writes to her on the 6th December:—

I think ladies like the title, and I hope you do. The belief that you will be proud of it is my greatest, I may say my only, pleasure in being K.C.B.

A few days later White went up with Sir Frederick Roberts to Bhamo, in the north of Burma, and on the 18th he writes to Lady White from there:—

I have enjoyed the trip up the river much, & have laid in a store of information about the different posts and the country generally which will enable me to settle questions regarding them with much more confidence than I could have done last year. Sir Frederick is a first-class chief to serve under. He is only too anxious to be always at work. He has both mental & bodily vigour to a degree I have never before met with in the Army. We have organised some more little campaigns, I think it likely I shall be left here next summer. I had determined not to remain, but it would be professional suicide for me to throw up the very high position which I shall

occupy if I am left in command in Upper Burma again this year. The force will be a very much larger one, and it will give me a most indisputable claim to a division in India when the field force is abolished. . . .

He was, in fact, as he said, commanding an Army Corps—21,500 men divided into six Brigades. He adds: "I always feel as if I were being chaffed when they Sir George me."

White's last letter to his wife in 1886 seems to show that his year in Burma, and all his hard work, had left him in good health, and, for a man of fifty-one, in fairly good condition.

MANDALAY, 27*th December* 86.

Yesterday morning I flattered myself I might indulge in a ride as it was Sunday, and I would have time to write during the day. I went out for the ride, and my horse was so fresh he threw me clean over his head twice. The first time I was not looking out, but the second time I was sitting as tight as I could. My horses get no work, and are consequently above themselves. I fell wonderfully light, and am not even stiff this morning. . . .

It seems unnecessary to describe in detail the military operations which White had to carry out after Sir Frederick Roberts had left, or the measures taken for the spread of civil government. But the work went on steadily, with increasing success, and before many months had passed it was possible to say that the country had "been reduced to peace and order, and furnished with a strong and efficient Government, complete in all departments." It was a

fine feat of combined military and administrative skill, and White deserved a large share of the credit, though the Chief Commissioner, Bernard, perhaps deserved even more.

No one recognised this as clearly as White. The gratitude and admiration which he felt for his military chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, were no more strongly expressed in his letters than his regard for the civilian, who was now retiring, broken down with overwork and illness:—

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *8th Jany.* 87.

Don't neglect to call upon Lady Roberts, and remember to go out of your way to be grateful to Sir Fred. His kindness & interest in me has been something that I have not been accustomed to, and I have enlisted more thoroughly than ever under his standard.

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *31st Jany.* 87.

I shall never get on so well with anybody else as I have with Bernard. I have the highest respect & affection for him, and his ability is undoubted. He fell upon difficult times, and has one bad fault as an official: he is too conscientious to throw money about recklessly, and therefore makes many enemies.

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *21st Feby.* 87.

I often long to have Bobs back with his genial manners and his quick perception of what is wanted. I have now to come to what I consider the greatest loss I have had since I arrived in Upper Burma, the departure of my friend Sir

Charles Bernard. Hounded by the press, & abused by the communities in Rangoon, whose interests he would not push on at the sacrifice of the Native part of the community, and too conscientious & indifferent to his own personal interests to feed or to flatter the newspaper correspondents, he has been freely abused. Lord Dufferin, who knows his value, was not, I imagine, sorry to get a letter from Sir Chas., when he was really very ill in Rangoon, saying that he could not trust to being able to continue his arduous work throughout the hot weather. The offer of resignation was closed with, and now, altho' much better, he is on his way home. With him goes my one adviser in whom I have confidence, & whose superiority over myself I felt at every point.

And two months later White writes to his wife again on this subject in words which, coming from so keen a soldier, are an extraordinary tribute to Bernard's worth :—

I miss Bernard more than I can say. If I had to go on service to-morrow in command of an army, I would rather have Bernard by me than any soldier I know.

White's opinion had been formed in circumstances which afforded the best possible test of character, and it is only fair to the memory of a devoted public servant, who never had justice done him, to quote these words.

With regard to what White says about Lord Dufferin, I am sure that he had a high respect for Bernard's character, but in some matters the two men were not altogether suited to one another. Bernard was a nephew of John Lawrence, and belonged to the same school. Very simple and un-

assuming by nature, he was perhaps too careless of appearances. On one occasion, when we were driving to some ceremony in Mandalay, there was a momentary check in the movement of the procession. Bernard, as Chief Commissioner, was in a carriage with the Viceroy, in full uniform. Never thinking of his own dignity, and as active as a schoolboy, he had in an instant put his hand on the side of the carriage and vaulted into the road to make inquiries. Lord Dufferin smiled, but, always careful of the proprieties himself, and expecting others to be so, he did not like it. They were a curious contrast—the one a courtly diplomatist, and the other, with his rough-hewn face and eager kindly eyes, essentially a worker. His enthusiastic sense of duty seemed to shut out all thought of himself. Such men often fail to be appreciated; but they have done much to build up the British Empire.

Lady White and her children had gone down to Cornwall, and White writes to her on the 11th March 1887:—

I wish I could take a peep at you all at Trevathan. I do not look forward with pleasure to seeing the children so much bigger. Little children are my delight, and I fear even May will be past the very interesting years. If the Horse Guards make me a Major-General, I think I am certain to be offered a division in India. This would again separate me from the children, but I will make it a condition that I get some little time at home. You would not, I am sure, dislike coming out to India for a year or two more after we had had a run at home. . . .

In the middle of June the Government of India published a gazette regarding the operations in Burma. The following are extracts showing how White's work was regarded. The Commander-in-Chief wrote:—

The executive Command in Upper Burma has been held from an early period in 1886 by Major-General Sir G. S. White. On him devolved the arduous task of keeping head against ever-increasing dacoity throughout the hot and unhealthy months of the year; and when the time came that reinforcements could be safely despatched, and the force in Upper Burma assumed the proportions of an army, he continued to exercise command over the whole as a General of Division.

In this capacity Sir George White has fully established his skill and ability; and Sir Frederick Roberts trusts that his meritorious services may be recognised in such a manner as may seem proper to Her Majesty. . . .

Lord Dufferin's words were not less strong:—

The Gazette of India.

16*th June* 1887.

His Excellency in Council congratulates the Army upon the spirit which has been shown by all ranks in confronting the difficulties inseparable from a campaign, carried on over a vast extent of country, amid dense jungles and forests, and under great stress of climate,—conditions which have called forth high military qualities. The difficulties and hardships of the campaign have not been overcome without heavy loss; and the Governor-General in Council deplores the death of many brave officers and men, in action and from disease, who have fallen in the discharge of their duty to their Queen and Country. . . .

The admirable services rendered by Major-General Sir

George White, K.C.B., V.C., in command of the Upper Burma Field Force throughout the whole of the operations,—the skill and capacity with which he exercised the command of the large and widely extended force under his orders during the most trying season of the year, and subsequently directed comprehensive operations under the Commander-in-Chief's orders during the past cold season with such marked ability and success,—call for the particular acknowledgment and approbation of the Governor-General in Council.

This was gratifying, and again gave White some hopes of getting his substantive promotion; but he was not sanguine about it, and his letters continue to show anxiety lest he should find himself "on the shelf" at 55.

Meanwhile he continued to work hard, whether in his old quarters at Mandalay, or marching through the hills of the Shan tribes to the eastward, or making tours of inspection in steamboats along the course of the Chindwin and Irawadi and other rivers. Though he was now under the orders of Sir Charles Arbuthnot, the Commander-in-Chief in Madras, he continued to correspond at great length in "demi-official" form with Sir Frederick Roberts, to whom he writes on the 19th June:—

MANDALAY, *19th June* 87.

I find there is little permanent effect from sending expeditions into disturbed districts. The disturbers lie close in the jungle, or retire before our troops, to reappear as soon as we have gone. It therefore becomes necessary to form posts in every district to be reclaimed. These numerous posts necessitate cutting up the force into very small detachments. Several of these detachments are commanded by Native

officers, who have on the whole done right good service. I hope your Excellency will not disapprove of this arrangement. I know it is unmilitary & open to crushing criticism where it fails, but I have recognised that I can best serve the state by working the troops like military police, & I have so far escaped without disaster. Our difficulty is to protect those who have a right to look to us for succour. The villagers ask for help, & sometimes even for a nucleus round which they can rally. "Give us support," they say, "& we will throw in our lot with you, but it is cruel to compromise us & to leave us to our fate." This is a call to which I hate turning a deaf ear.

It was rather risky work, but White knew his enemy, and the result was successful. Though there were sharp fights at times, and painful losses, the country was growing quieter. Revenue was coming in from the districts, and in parts it was safe for English ladies to join their husbands. Progress was not uninterrupted, of course. On the 18th August White writes to his wife:—

The week here has passed uneventfully, but we have had much trouble in the country, pretenders and dacoits springing up in all directions. There are four in the field against our troops now. I am so tired of it. I hate ordering troops out this weather, as I know every move means fever and loss, but the country would all get into a ferment if these are not hunted out. At this season it is next to impossible to catch them, as to remain out in the jungle means deaths as well as fever.

This was the real trouble, the climate. About the same time White shows that, besides many dead, the force had lost since the beginning of the year six

hundred British soldiers and over eleven hundred Indians broken down and sent away. Still progress was being made, and rapidly made.

It was due in large measure to the new Chief Commissioner, Charles Crosthwaite.

His work is very heavy [White writes to Lady White], and the ridiculous fuss that is made about every question raised in the House of Commons disgusts him. Our rulers want backbone. Crosthwaite is a very straight, nice little man, and very determined, but I doubt whether he will remain here. Nobody can replace Bernard to me, but I should be very sorry to lose Crosthwaite.

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *24th August.*

I am writing to you at 8 o'clock in the morning, having just come in from a long ride. This is a Burmese holiday, and the people are all out in smart clothes going to the pagoda to say their prayers, the women in great number, the young ones with their smartest tamains on (skirts), always of silk, and their glossy dark heads decked with flowers prettily arranged in their hair, which is dressed with the greatest care and trouble. Each has her, or his, little offering to leave at the pagoda—a bunch of plantains, flowers, etc. The little children, equally gaily dressed, toddle after to church, and all look bright and happy. I was struck to-day by the contrast presented by another party of Burman girls, headed by two Roman Catholic Sisters in their sad black dresses; the Burmese converts two & two in monotonous procession looked anything but as happy as their Buddhist sisters, and I thought must be hankering after the pagoda & its cheery congregations. . . .

I take a very gloomy view of Irish politics. Up till lately Home Rule has been the platform of a lot of outlaws, but now it has become the party cry of the most powerful party in the

State. Next turn of the political wheel and Home Rule is a certainty. . . .

I was kept on the *qui vive* yesterday, as we had information that there was to be a rising in the town in favour of one of the numerous pretenders that crop up. We caught the pretender just as he reached the rendezvous, and stopped the attempt. . . .

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *4th September* 87.

I shall not be sorry to be free from Burma. It will be a real good day when I feel the steamer swinging round to take me finally from Mandalay, & when I can say, "I have stuck to it till I was turned out." It has been a very long separation, but I feel now that if I lose a chance I may be done for life. I have had great luck so far, & I want to feel that I have a certainty of say £1500 a year before I give up work. I hear most sinister accounts of reductions in the lists of Major-Generals. If I miss that promotion I have only 3 years left to me as a Brigadier in India to do anything in. It is my best consolation to think that at 55 I shall be able to retire, having done enough to keep us decent. It won't do more. If Irish land gets worse I shall have to work as an agent or some such horror after I get my pension. I had a letter from Genl. Lockhart from Aden on his way home; he is much better, & writes wishing I was out of Burma. We got on very well; make friends with him if you get the chance, he is a fine fellow but cynical.

Lockhart, like many other officers, had been broken down by hard work and exposure in an unhealthy climate. As to his cynicism, it was skin-deep, covering a warm heart, and when employed for some years by the Indian Foreign Office he seemed to me as full of natural fun and spirits as a schoolboy. They made

him very popular and successful with the wild frontier tribesmen.

To Lady White.

IRRAWADDY FLOTILLA COMPY.'S
STEAMER "MAGAMY" *approaching* BHAMO,
17*th October* 87.

The home papers have taken up so warmly the undoubted injustice that has been done to the troops in Burma by cutting down the list of honours I am in some hopes the Govt. may yet insist on justice being done to this force. What I feel very much is that the troops who have added this vast province to the British Empire are refused even a medal to commemorate it. The medal authorised for Burma is the old frontier medal, which half the troops employed here already have. The Sepoys are very sore about it. They get very little out of a campaign & suffer much. A new ribbon to them is worth a great deal, & they all say that a great country has been added to the Queen's dominions, and ask why they are to get nothing, whereas the troops that went to the Soudan got two or three decorations. . . .

Did I tell you I had had a most handsome letter from the Viceroy, in which he says all possible nice things about my efforts to keep things going here? The civil officers keep pouring in warnings of risings throughout the country at the end of this month. I hope they won't come off, as they are so troublesome, and I don't want to have to kill more Burmans.

He did have to kill some more Burmans, but not very many. They were getting to understand that risings brought little plunder and occasionally severe punishment, for our officers and men were becoming used to their methods of warfare.

A month later White's fears of compulsory retirement as a Colonel were at an end for ever.

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, 21*st November* 87.

The news of the week to me has been a telegram from my staunch friend Sir Fred. from Sibi: "The Duke of Cambridge writes to me that he has withdrawn his objection to your Major-Generalcy. Warmest congratulations." I sent the little man a very grateful reply, but not a bit more so than I feel to him, for I owe my promotion to his persistent support of me.

Last night on my return from the expedition I have told you of, I found a telegram of congratulation from the Viceroy from Cawnpore. It is nice of him, & I know he has backed Roberts; so has your little friend Chesney. This secures me a division in India early. I must get a run home first, and you will have to come out with me and set me up even if you are allowed an occasional run home to see the children. I would like a year at home for many reasons. One is I would like to have leisure to study Cavalry and Artillery, which I have had no opportunity of picking up, and I don't like being ignorant of my work.

To John White.

MANDALAY, 21*st Novr.* 87.

I suppose all the Military papers will have a slap at me. I shall be the best hated man in the Upper ranks of the Army. I believe I go over about 280 Colonels, including some who think themselves quite the pick of the bunch.

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, 28*th November* 87.

It is a great lift, and I owe it all to my worthy chief Sir Fred. Chesney has also backed me well, and even the Viceroy has been a constant supporter. They all rate me a great deal higher than I feel to deserve, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have not allowed my name to appear anywhere I could suppress it, and I have not courted notice, much less popularity. . . .

To Lady White.

MANDALAY, *5th December* 87.

I am not quite so sanguine about getting away from Burma in spring as I was; Sir Fred., who is always most kind, writes that he hopes it will be possible to get me away. It will be a matter for consideration whether I stay here another year under any circumstances. The whole of Burma is to be made into one Command, and the garrison is much below what I have recommended. I don't care to embark in all the trouble and anxiety of a new tenor of command. The Field Force will be abolished in April. This restricts my power considerably, & will make the Chief Commissioner supreme, a position I have never yet allowed him in military matters, and I don't care to begin a rung lower. Of course as regards the territory embraced within the Command, it is magnificent. All Lower & Upper Burma taken together are as big as any Lt.-Governorship, & bigger, I fancy, than Bombay or Madras, but I am not quite sure of this, as I have no maps except of Burma, & I have enough of them to burn down Mandalay. But it is a siding, and will become more so every year. I would prefer something new even if in many respects worse.

White had not yet done with Burma, for in January 1888 it was proposed that he should remain there another year. Sir Frederick Roberts was ready to give him a Division in India, and he could have had a Brigade at Aldershot. This would in some ways have suited him best, for he was told by his medical advisers that he ought to go to England, and he had news that his wife's health was also doubtful. But, though he had done his work in Burma, and the country was now quiet, both Sir Frederick Roberts and Lord Dufferin thought that a change in that command was not yet desirable, and in the circum-

stances White felt that he had no choice. On the 27th January, therefore, he agreed to remain another year, asking only that he might be allowed three months' leave to England in April, when the Field Force was to be broken up and Upper Burma placed on a peace footing. This was granted to him.

Before leaving Burma White placed on record his views regarding the services of some of the officers under his command. There is one paragraph of his letter which, in view of future events, seems worth quoting. It is as follows:—

> Of officers of lower rank I would name Colonel W. P. Symons, South Wales Borderers, Commandant Mounted Infantry, whose special services have been frequent and varied. Where special difficulties have presented themselves there I have sent Colonel Symons. Whether those difficulties were military only, or increased by political complications, I have found his diagnosis of the situation a true one, and his measures to meet the difficulty well considered, prompt, and full of resource. His services have been of equal value to the Chief Commissioner and to myself.

On the 10th of April White embarked for England.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHITE'S TRANSFER TO QUETTA.

1888-1889.

In May 1888, after a continuous separation of nearly three years, White rejoined his wife and children. He writes to Sir Frederick Roberts that he found her in better health than he had expected, "and my children all that I could desire," so the meeting was a happy one.

His letter shows that the work done by our troops in Burma had been appreciated in England much more highly than he had supposed:—

Your Excellency asked me to write after I had seen the Duke of Cambridge. Very shortly after my arrival in London I called at the Horse Guards and had an interview with H.R.H., and found him very gracious. He alluded to all the work that had been done in Burma in complimentary terms, and said that in offering me the Brigade at Aldershot he had thought that it would be a good chance to keep me employed & to recruit my health until something else

turned up. . . . Later I attended his Levee and was cordially received by him.

The Prince of Wales also sent for me, & talked some time on Burman & Indian affairs. In fact I have been surprised to find so high an appreciation generally expressed for the work the troops have had to go through in Burma. I was also ordered down to Windsor to be knighted by Her Majesty. C. told me that it was a very exceptional honour, as I had already received the Warrant dispensing with the ceremony & authorising me to assume the title and wear the insignia of a K.C.B.

White had therefore good reason to be satisfied with his reception in England, and his short holiday proved very enjoyable. Before it ended he went over to Ireland, and was given a warm welcome in his own county. There, speaking to an enthusiastic assembly at Broughshane, he touched upon Burma, saying that he meant to use the power confided to him "for what should and must be the first aim of all civilised government: the protection of the weak and the law-abiding against the strong and the law-breaker," but pointing out that much had been done already, that the army in Burma, which was once between forty and fifty thousand men, was now not fifteen thousand, and that the control of the country had been handed over to the police.

He must have received during his stay in England a letter from Lord Dufferin, which is among his papers. It shows so conclusively what the Indian Government thought of his work that I give it in full:—

SIMLA, 20*th April* 88.

MY DEAR WHITE,—

I had intended to telegraph to you to Bombay to wish you God-speed and a pleasant holiday in England; but in the confusion of travelling up to Simla I missed the day. I send you therefore this line, which perhaps you may not be sorry to receive, to express to you in my own name, and on behalf of all my colleagues, our deep sense of the great services you have rendered us in Burmah. From first to last you have been everything that you should have been—wise, prudent, reasonable, economical, conciliatory, and, above all, successful. What more can any Commander wish to be said about him! Wherever I go, I shall always be glad to bear testimony to your merits, and I have already had the pleasure of acquainting all our authorities in England, both military and civil, as well as Her Majesty, of the high estimation I entertain for you.

Yours sincerely,

DUFFERIN.

It would, indeed, have been difficult to say more, and when White left England again on the 15th June for another turn of Indian service he must have felt that his reputation was now firmly established. He had a hot and rough voyage out, finding comfort in a number of books lent to him by Colonel Neville Lyttelton,[1] then Military Secretary in Bombay, and on arrival at Aden he found a letter from Sir Frederick Roberts saying the Viceroy wanted to see him in Simla. On the 2nd of July he was in Bombay: "torrents of rain. . . . I feel horribly lonely, and have *les diables noirs* badly, but must knock them out of

[1] General the Hon. Sir Neville Lyttelton, G.C.B., now Governor of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

me with hard work." A few pleasant days were spent at Simla, where he met many old friends, and enjoyed the kindest of hospitality from Sir Frederick and Lady Roberts at Snowdon. Then he set off again, and on the 27th July was once more in his old quarters, the palace at Mandalay.

He re-entered them, he tells his wife, with his heart in his boots.

> You have now got through the first and worst month of our separation, but I am in all the horrors of returning to this miserable place, where all the excitement has passed away and nothing but the intense dulness remains.

Mandalay in the rainy season was certainly a depressing place, and now that all serious resistance had been put down, the work before him was rather police work than soldiering. Still, it had to be done, and there was some satisfaction in finding that the complete restoration of order was in sight. White writes to Sir Frederick Roberts the same day, July 28 :—

> MANDALAY, 28*th July* 88.
>
> I arrived here yesterday morning, and have not yet had time to find out much. I am glad, however, to be able to say that even in the three months I have been away the progress made towards the pacification of the country has been most marked, and if July 88 is compared with July 87, the greatly increased hold we now have of the country is a much greater advance than I had anticipated. I heard favourable & hopeful accounts at all the places called at on my way up. Minbu and Sagain have been the worst districts, but the constant work there is beginning to tell,

and in many instances the villagers are siding with us earnestly against the dacoits. If this continues, and there is every hope of it, rapid results will follow.

It did continue, and the Burmese country proper gave little more serious trouble, but White and the Chief Commissioner, Crosthwaite, still had much work to do together in reducing to order the uncivilised tribes, both to east and west. They were on excellent terms, for both were as reasonable and conciliatory as they were straightforward, and the work progressed well, though with some fighting and loss at times, for the tribesmen behind their stockades were not easy to dislodge.

Meanwhile White received news that he was definitely appointed to the command of a Division in India. He writes to his wife on the 1st of September :—

MANDALAY, 1*st Sept.* 88.

On Sunday I got a letter from Sir Fred. Roberts, in which he wrote most kindly as usual. He said I was gazetted to the Bengal Staff *vice* Lynch, and the Viceroy & he were anxious that I should remain in Burma to carry out the operations during the cold weather. He added, with his usual consideration & kindness, that if I felt my health had suffered, that neither the Viceroy nor he would press my further stay. He gave me the choice of Allahabad, Lucknow, or Quetta. Lucknow will not be vacant for some little time, but it will be open by next spring. I took a day to consider, & then wired that I would carry out the work here as I am in high health, and would look to getting Quetta in spring. This decides it, and you will join me there. . . .

Quetta was a Frontier command, and better suited to White's tastes than an ordinary command in the settled parts of India. It was also the one in which Sir Frederick Roberts wished to see him. His future destination thus settled, White returned contentedly enough to the work he was doing.

A few days later he writes to his wife :—

> Have you seen that a very important Mission has been arranged to go to Kabul immediately?—Mr Durand, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Mackenzie Wallace, &c. We must give such careful men as Durand and Lord Dufferin credit for knowing what results are likely to follow on the Mission, but it is horribly like the former one. They are to have a small escort of Bengal Cavalry with them, which I think foolish. A few of our sowars could not help them if they were attacked as Cavagnari was, and their arrogant air walking about the Bazaars irritates the Afghans. Besides, the beauty of the Afghan ladies tempts the sowars, and quarrels thus arise.

White's criticism was just, and showed his usual common-sense. The proposed Mission was put off owing to fighting in Afghanistan, and when it did take place some years later no escort accompanied us. We were then received by the Afghans with the greatest friendliness, and more than once they commented upon the confidence thus shown in their hospitality. If we had gone with the escort which White deprecated, the result might have been very different.

About this time White's old friend, Ian Hamilton, had written to Lady White expressing his belief that

White would be the next Commander-in-Chief in India. It was the first time the idea had been put forward, and it elicited from White the only word of annoyance with Hamilton that is to be found in all his letters. He seemed really vexed. "Johnnie Hamilton ought not to write such insincere nonsense," he answered. "He knows it is out of the question," and so on. Yet Hamilton proved to be not only sincere, but right.

On the 22nd October White writes to Sir Frederick Roberts:—

MANDALAY, 22 *October* 88.

Upper Burma has reached that desirable stage at which there is little of political importance to write about. We have pushed on the work of pacification sufficiently effectually to reduce the place to that state of ghastly dulness that must intervene between the interest that attaches to a Campaign & the comfort & amusements of completed Cantonments. . . .

Mandalay was in fact getting to be something like a peaceful cantonment, and White's work was very different from what it had been during 1886 and 1887. Instead of getting up at four in the morning and toiling without intermission till nightfall, he was now able to take exercise, and even to get some snipe-shooting. It was poor sport, he writes of his first day,

and the sun was blazing hot. I know it is foolish to risk a breakdown so early in the season; but I do like the change from the monotony of office work and the routine of lawn tennis, band, and iced drinks. The snipe are not yet fully

in, and we only got 12 couple, shooting from 8 in the morning till 12. The water is still in many places up to my waist. After this moon the birds will be fully in, & I intend to devote myself to the jheels all round.

Nevertheless there was still some work to be done. White's letter-books contain copies of long "demi-officials" on all sorts of subjects, showing hard thought and even some anxiety, for one or two detachments of police had been cut up by dacoits, and there was raiding in various directions by Frontier tribes. Before the end of the year White himself was on a river steamer, going up to join an expedition against the Chins, who were giving much trouble and were hard to reach in their jungle-covered hills. He did not get back to Mandalay until the middle of February 1889, and even then several small expeditions were going on. On his return journey he writes to his wife:—

14*th Feby.* 89.

I have enjoyed my time in the Chin hills very much. The work has interested me. It is a big job getting a force over such hills as we surmounted—between eight & nine thousand feet. It made me young again to be on foot amongst the soldiers, and as I was really out for a holiday I dropped the General and played the Captain again. I must reserve some account of what we did & saw for letters to the children, whom what I have to tell will interest & amuse. I felt quite downhearted when I had to leave those glorious mountains which I was the first to invade, & nothing would give me greater pleasure than to complete the exploration up to the frontier of Chittajoing, thus joining India & Burma through the shortest line. . . .

We had some real rough work. Bivouacs at over 8000 ft. in Feby. on a wind-swept mountain range is cold work, & many of the men got dysentery & fever, but I got into the highest health & really enjoyed it. I quite dislike leaving Burma now that the time is so near. Quetta will not have half the excitement or the novelty, & I shall miss the necessity for meeting the ever-recurring raids of rebels & dacoits. I think I have put the screw on the Chins, & I hope to keep it on. They are a much more manly race than the Burmans, and stood their ground on many occasions until we were quite close to them. Their fire, however, is not very accurate, altho' they have great numbers of guns. . . .

Evidently, now that the time had come for him to lay down his command, his feeling was not one of unmixed pleasure. In one of his last letters from Mandalay he writes—

I am leaving Upper Burma with many regrets. I know that I shall miss the independence of command that I have exercised here, & the constant field of enterprise & change which this vast province has afforded.

But in the main Upper Burma was now fairly broken in, and White could leave it with a clear conscience, for serious military operations were no longer to be anticipated. The Civil officers had got a fair grip on the country, the railway line was open up to Mandalay, roads were being pushed in all directions, revenue was coming in freely. In little more than two years a new province as large as one of the great states of Europe had not only been added to the British Empire, but pacified and made more prosperous than it had ever been. In this

really fine performance White's share had been a conspicuous one.

On the whole, therefore, he was not sorry to get away, and he went on board the steamer at Rangoon with a light heart. On the 1st of May he took over his new command at Quetta.

It affords an illustration of the great extent of the British Indian Empire that the distance in a straight line from the eastern frontier of one command to the western frontier of the other was considerably more than two thousand miles, or several hundreds of miles greater than the distance from London to Constantinople. And it would be difficult to imagine a contrast more striking than that between the climates and populations of the two provinces. White went from a land of jungle and swamp, inhabited by a merry, light-natured Mongol folk, Buddhist by religion, to an arid stretch of sand and stone where a green oasis was rare, and where the grave Pathan or Beluch was a fanatical Mahomedan and a soldier from his childhood. Northern Scotland and Southern Italy had more in common than Beluchistan and Burma.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BELUCHISTAN.

1889-1892.

THE great frontier province or protectorate of Beluchistan consisted of the territories of the so-called Beluch Confederacy, a number of tribes more or less united under the chiefship of the Khan of Kelat, together with certain districts detached from Afghanistan after the war of 1879-80. It was a tract larger than England, stretching from India proper on the east to the frontier of Persia on the west, and from Afghanistan to the sea. The bulk of this tract was composed of deserts and mountains, and the population was very small—perhaps not much more than half a million; but, especially in the northern part of it, there were some fertile oases. The whole block formed one of the two outlying protectorates—if one can call Afghanistan a protectorate — which cover our western frontier from foreign encroachment, just as Burma once covered our eastern frontier.

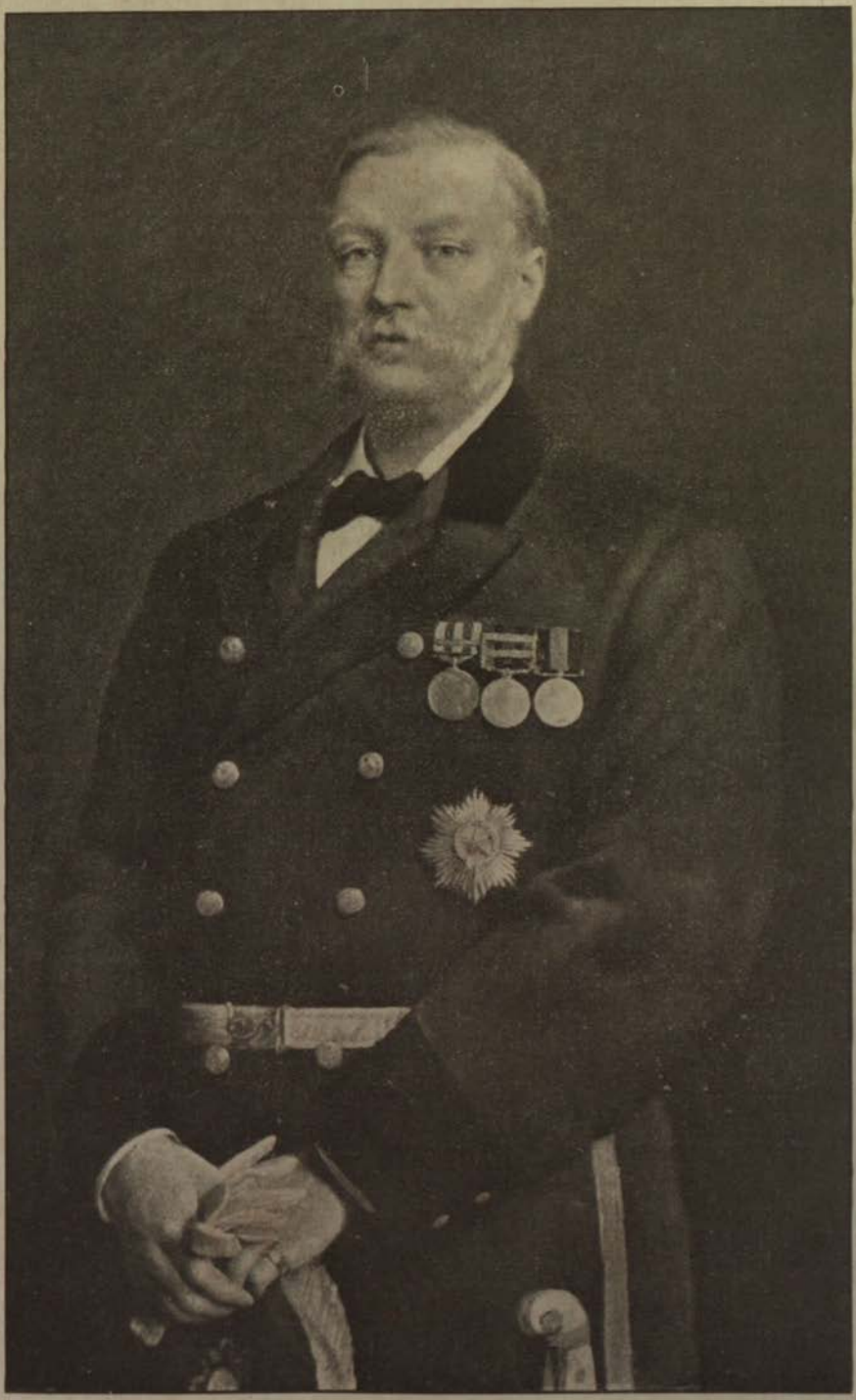
In 1889 Beluchistan was controlled in a somewhat patriarchal fashion by one of the most remarkable

men who ever served on the Indian frontier, Sir Robert Sandeman. Bold, shrewd, and extraordinarily tenacious, Sandeman had acquired an influence over the wild border tribesmen such as few men have possessed. He was liked as well as feared, for his strength of character was not more conspicuous than his kindness of heart; and he had the bluff good-humoured manner which always tells with uncivilised men. If he spoke their languages indifferently, with a broad Scotch accent, he made them understand him and trust him; and throughout the province his word was law. Beluchistan, to tell the truth, was in a sense his own creation. He had thirteen years before induced the least "Forward" of Viceroys, Lord Northbrook, to let him overstep the old border of India and go up among the Beluch tribes with the view of settling their differences. From that moment he had never wavered in his purpose of bringing them under British control; and in spite of much discouragement, sometimes in spite of positive orders from the Government of India, he had got his own way. The Afghan War of 1879-80 had shown the value of his influence in Beluchistan, and had greatly strengthened his position. After the war there was no farther question of withdrawing from Quetta, where he had established himself.

In 1889 Sandeman was a power, for the Government had recognised that he had a genius for dealing with wild tribes; and the "Sandeman system," of conciliation as he called it, was beginning to extend all along the North-West Frontier, from the sea to

the Himalayas. Hitherto the system in force had been to leave the tribes alone, in complete independence, our officers being forbidden to cross the British border. If any of the tribes misbehaved themselves, after the manner of Highlanders all over the world, by raiding the Lowlands, an expedition was despatched against the offenders and some punishment was inflicted; after which the British troops came back and waited for the next act of aggression. Sandeman held that this system was undignified and ineffective. He urged that our officers, instead of being forbidden to enter tribal territory, should be encouraged to do so, taking some risks, but obtaining an influence over the tribesmen and gradually bringing them under control. In this way, he urged, the great belt of mountainous tribal territory which lies along our Western frontier would gradually be transformed from a barrier against ourselves to a barrier against any outside enemy who might try to attack us; and we should meanwhile be spared the discredit and trouble of constant raids on our territory, followed by punitive expeditions. There is much to be said on both sides of this question, and it is too complicated for discussion here; but, on the whole, Sandeman was probably right; and though there have been fluctuations of feeling on the subject, his views have gradually prevailed, until at the present time his system, with some local modifications, is practically in operation throughout the whole length of the Frontier.

Twenty-five years ago, when White took over the



COLONEL SIR ROBERT SANDEMAN, K.C.S.I.

From a painting by the Hon. John Collier. Reproduced by permission of Mr John Murray from 'The Life of Sir Robert Sandeman.'

military command in Beluchistan, the Sandeman system, as I have said, was only beginning to extend along the border line. It was in full force at the southern end, in Beluchistan; and many influential authorities in India, including the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, warmly supported it; but others regarded it as totally unsuited to the northern tribes, which were more powerful and fanatical than the southern; and as a general system it was still on its trial.

White, as I have shown in previous chapters of this book, had no belief in the policy of searching for scientific frontiers beyond the natural limits of India. He was now in military command of a great bastion thrown out beyond those limits, and he felt for Sandeman the respect which one strong clear-headed man feels for another; but he was by no means sure that the Sandeman system of dealing with the tribes was a right one, and he was too independent a thinker to fall easily under any other man's influence. He came to Quetta, therefore, with an open mind.

White arrived on the 3rd of May 1889. He had at one time hoped that Lady White might arrive before him, but this had been prevented by the ill-health of her mother, who was to have had charge of his children, and White had accepted the disappointment with his usual unselfishness.

I would not think of letting her join me [he wrote to Mrs Baly] unless you are ever so much better and quite fit to replace her with the children. I had looked forward to her coming out, as my house is very lonely, and she knows

how to brighten it up; but she would be unhappy, and so should I, if we felt we had given you more to do than you are fit for.

There was something very chivalrous and touching in White's affection for his wife's mother, which comes out frequently in his letters.

A few days after his arrival he writes to his wife:—

The journey from Karachi here was very hot, but the heat only lasted one day. . . . At a place called Sharigh we breakfasted, & from that on the change was most marked. All the passengers began pulling on greatcoats. I had not got one, & had got fever (slight), which stuck to me for a couple of days, but has quite gone now.

The railway is in many parts a wonderful engineering enterprise. . . . Mr O'Callaghan, the Chief Engineer of the line, came to Quetta in the same train with me. . . . He made an interesting travelling companion, & pointed out the places and works as we passed along. . . .

On arrival at Quetta I was met by Sir J. Hudson,[1] in uniform, with all the staff, & also by Sir Harry Prendergast,[2] in a smart black coat. I had telegraphed to Hudson that I wanted my arrival to be private, but he wouldn't let me off. I was in a dirty suit of flannels. I drove off with Hudson in the brougham I had bought for you to the house, which disappointed me much. It is a miserable hovel, dark & gloomy, with one decent bedroom. The drawing-room & dining-room are also wretched and gloomy . . . the garden . . . is a jungle, but it is full of roses just now, & very sweet. There is also

[1] Lieutenant-General Sir J. Hudson, K.C.B., had been appointed to another command, and White was taking his place.

[2] His old chief in Burma, who was acting temporarily for Sir Robert Sandeman.

a very good crop of strawberries, on which Jackson[1] & I have been feasting freely since we came. There are also first-rate English peach trees, and I believe plums when in season.

I was quite unprepared for the beautiful climate at Quetta. The thermometer now at 12 o'clock noon is under 70° in my office with all doors open, and I sleep at night with two heavy rugs over me. When the sun goes down the evenings are very cold, & I wear my thickest tweed suits all day long. I believe it to be much colder than Simla at this season. They tell me here that it gets hot later on, but I have seen enough to know that it can be nothing to what I expected. There are no summer rains, so of course the heat increases up to July. Although we have had rain three or four times since I arrived on the 3rd, the climate is very dry. I could not understand the feeling of having a dry skin, but I have now shaken off the fever. I never laid up for it. . . .

Now about the people. I must begin by telling you that I arrived on Thursday evening, and that on Monday commenced the Quetta week—soldier games, cricket & lawn tennis matches, races, a ball, public dinner, &c.—so I have had great chances of seeing the people. I think what struck me most amongst the population was the appearance of the children, great red-cheeked, fat little people, looking like Brighton rather than India. They play about all day long, & are sunburnt on the top of the look of health. I have never seen children look so well anywhere. . . .

General Chesney has written me a very complimentary letter on my command in Burma. . . . The military expeditions have been most successful everywhere. I am really proud of what I have done on the frontier, for it was my doing. The Chins are giving in. . . .

I have to start off immediately on field manœuvres with the troops here. The plans were all made before I arrived.

[1] Captain Jackson of the Hampshire Regiment, now Colonel Jackson, had been his Aide-de-Camp in Burma, and went with him to Beluchistan, where he did excellent service.

I would gladly have had time to look about me, but I have no option & must be off again. . . .

I gave my first party this evening to three little girls—strawberries & cream the inducement.

Altogether, in spite of his wife's absence, and the "miserable hovel" in which he was to live, White's first impressions of his new home were favourable. And they well might be, for Quetta in May is a very pleasant place. Standing more than 5000 feet above the level of the sea, and surrounded by mountains, it has at this season a most agreeable climate, and the scenery is beautiful. The valley is full of cornfields, wild-flowers abound, and though the mountains are sparsely wooded, the dry, clear air and brilliant sunshine give them exquisite shades of colour. It is true that Beluchistan in general is a vast arid tract of rock and desert, but Quetta itself and some of the neighbouring districts are, except in the late summer, really delightful.

Moreover, for a soldier the position was deeply interesting. Quetta was being strongly fortified on an extensive scale, and had a large garrison of British and native troops. If at any time another advance were made into Afghanistan it would necessarily be one of the most important points on the frontier, for a force advancing from it could reach Kandahar in a few days. A tunnel had been bored through the Khojak range north of Quetta, so that troops could be brought by rail to the very edge of the Afghan plains, and preparations had been made for extending the railway rapidly to Kandahar itself. White therefore found him-

self no longer in a far-away corner on the eastern side of the Indian empire, but in the very front of our fighting line on the west, and therefore in the best possible position in case of war with Russia, to which at that time every soldier in India was looking forward. Nothing could have suited him better.

When his first manœuvres, and the Queen's birthday parade, were over, and he had seen something of the troops in Quetta, he started off to see the Khojak tunnel and the posts beyond it. He writes to his wife on the 28th May:—

I leave to-day at 3 o'clock by train for the other side of the Khojak range, where I have to inspect a post we are going to take up nearer the plains of Afghanistan. . . .

To-night I dine at the Khojak with the officers of the 23rd Pioneers, with whom I fought side by side at Charasia and afterwards at Kandahar. I shall be glad to meet them again. The tunnel through the Khojak is the great work. It points without doubt to an advance of the railway to Kandahar. I heard a good story of an old stationmaster here who was asked, "Do you think the railway will go on to Kandahar?" His reply was, "Well, I don't think that 'ere 'ole was made through the 'ill to peep through!"

The old stationmaster was right enough as far as intentions went; but twenty-five years have passed since then, and there is no railway to Kandahar. The Afghans do not want it, and have always regarded the tunnel with extreme jealousy. When I was in Kabul in 1893, negotiating with the Amir about his frontiers, he spoke of the tunnel as a pistol pointed straight at his head. I tried to

make him see that it was a pistol pointed at any foreign enemy who might attack him, but that view did not seem to appeal to him at all. And the instinct which makes Asiatic rulers distrustful of the advance of Western civilisation is not wholly unsound.

Lord Dufferin had now been succeeded in India by Lord Lansdowne, and White had been informed that the new Viceroy wished to see him in Simla.

I wish I had not to go [he writes]. The life at Simla bores me, & I hate staying in other people's houses for long.

This had always been his feeling, and it ran in the family. His departure was put off for some days owing to a fall from his horse on stony ground, which involved a badly cut elbow; but by the 14th of June he was well enough to start, and after a very hot railway journey through Sind, where he says "the heat in the shade was officially registered at 122°," he arrived in Simla. He stayed as usual with Sir Frederick Roberts, and then with Lord Lansdowne. He writes to his wife on the 13th July:—

Since last I wrote I have had a very pleasant visit at the Viceregal Lodge, as they call it now. Both Lord and Lady Lansdowne were as kind and nice as they could be. . . . Lord Lansdowne is getting on very well as Viceroy. Everybody likes him & her, & he has already mastered the business. The Secretaries all have a great admiration of him, & he is straight and strong.

The Viceregal Lodge was a fine new house built

under the personal supervision of Lord Dufferin, who had taken the greatest interest in every detail. It stood on the summit of a hill, and commanded a magnificent view in all directions, to the peaks of the snowy range on the northern horizon, and to the plains of the Punjab far away in the south. He christened it after the Viceroy's residence in Ireland, preferring the new name to the familiar old "Government House." He occupied it for a few months before he left India, and it remains as a monument to his energy and taste.

Before White returned to Quetta he had arranged for the enlargement of his own house, and for the grant to him of two months' leave. Lord Lansdowne and Sir Frederick Roberts were both going to see the Khojak tunnel in the autumn, and he was anxious that Lady White should be at Quetta to receive them; so he proposed to spend a fortnight in England to help her in making preparations, and then to bring her out. This plan was altered because of the heat on the voyage, and he came out again alone; but he had seen his wife and children and enjoyed his short visit. Early in October he was again in Quetta. He writes to her on the 6th: "I had a bad return last night of sleeplessness and depression, my *damnosa hereditas*," but she was to join him shortly, and he shook off his depression by turning to his old remedy, hard work.

There was plenty of work to do, though not as much as in Burma. A civilian whose service has not brought him into contact with troops, especially

troops in outlying frontier districts, has no idea of the mass of detailed supervision, and correspondence, which falls to the lot of the officer commanding a Division like Quetta. In White's volumes of "demi-official" letters, often copied in his own hand, are many extending to six, eight, ten pages of foolscap, on every variety of subject. Now he discusses with minute care in letters to various military authorities the medical arrangements for the force under his orders, now the water supply, the alignment and arming of fortifications, the question of "deferred pay" for soldiers, the disposal of their worn clothing, the classes from which recruits for certain native regiments should be drawn, the establishment of fresh posts in newly annexed country, the provision of quarters for hospital nurses, the building of houses and barracks, and innumerable other matters. Then he has to deal with complaints or proposals by the civil and "political" officers, strong and determined men some of them, Sandeman for example, with whom he has to be very temperate and reasonable. Further, he has to think over, and give his opinion upon, such broad questions as the proper system of punishing frontier tribes for outrages in British territory, or the positions to be taken by the Indian army in case of war with Russia. When all this had to be done in addition to the actual command of the troops, the organisation of expeditions and manœuvres, the inspection of Brigades and regiments, it will be readily understood that an officer in White's place had his hands fairly full.

During this cold weather of 1889-90 White had also to receive the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief, and to show them various matters of military interest on the frontier. He had to do the same thing for the Duke of Connaught, who was then commanding the Bombay Army, and for the Governor of Madras, Lord Connemara. These visits were interesting, but involved considerable arrangement and work. Of the Duke's visit White writes on the 6th February 1890 to Sir Frederick Roberts :—

> The Duke of Connaught's visit went off pleasantly. I never met any one in any class who took more pains to be gracious and considerate. I had never met H.R.H. before & was struck by his energy and activity, his keenness on all military matters, and his knowledge of detail.

And a month later, when there was some talk of the Duke succeeding Sir Frederick as Commander-in-Chief, White writes that if this did not prevent Sir Frederick getting an extension of term, "I should be glad to see him in command of the Army."

It may be noted here that White himself was one of those whose names had been mentioned for the succession. I have noticed elsewhere that when Ian Hamilton had suggested this as a possibility during White's time in Burma, White had been vexed. Now he writes to Sir Frederick Roberts, "For myself I have never allowed my ambition to soar so high, even in thought." But he no longer regards the idea as so preposterous. He writes to his sister and brother :—

To Miss Jane White.

QUETTA, 25*th May* 90.

I am very anxious as to who is to succeed Sir Fred. Roberts as Comdr.-in-Chief in India. I wish he was likely to get an extension, but I hear this is not likely. He will be a very great loss to India, in fact it will be impossible to replace him. I shall miss him probably more than anyone else, as he has been such a good supporter of mine. I rather hope that the Duke of Connaught may succeed him. . .

To John White.

QUETTA, 15*th June* 90.

My own genuine opinion is that I am rated too high in India. I believe if the Chiefship, after next, were to go in India I would have considerable local backing. There is a strong idea that the Duke of Connaught may succeed Sir Fred., & if so he would probably not stay very long, about 2 or three years at the most. I hear (secretly) that I have backers to succeed Sir G. Chesney as Milty. member of the Viceroy's Council. Sir G.'s time is up about July '91, but I shall never believe it till it is officially offered to me, and I really scarcely care to enter upon charge of the most responsible department of the Govt. of India at this hour of my day. I shall be 55 about the day you get this. . . .

As a fact Sir Frederick Roberts received an extension of his term and remained in India, so the matter dropped for two years.

Meanwhile a less personal matter was occupying White's attention. To the north-west of the vast tract of country of which Sandeman had become the practical ruler was a piece of no-man's-land called the Zhob Valley. With two smaller connected valleys it formed a district somewhat larger than Switzerland, and its position made it a district of importance, for it

lay at the rear of some troublesome frontier tribes, and also enabled its possessor to command from the west one of the great passes leading from India to Afghanistan. Zhob had long been practically independent, but for some years Sandeman had recognised its value, and had striven with characteristic pertinacity to bring the Indian Government round to his views, and let him occupy it. Eventually he had succeeded, and in December 1889 he had marched into Zhob and formally announced that it had become a part of the British Protectorate.

But though Zhob had been taken over without firing a shot, thanks to Sandeman's extraordinary influence over the tribesmen, the elements of disorder both in Zhob itself and in the neighbouring mountains had not been extirpated, and some attacks were made upon our people.

In the summer of 1890, therefore, it was decided that it would be desirable to march a considerable British force through the country, in order to supplement and solidify Sandeman's political action.

The carrying out of this operation naturally fell to White, and after a preliminary tour in Zhob, he set to work to make preparations for the expedition. In October, a sufficient force [1] having been collected and provided with transport, White and Sandeman started on their march. It is only necessary to say here that the whole affair was completely successful. There was practically no fighting, but the effect of the expedition was nevertheless a very important one, for not only

[1] A brigade of infantry with some cavalry and guns.

was the Zhob valley thoroughly broken in, but White's troops took in reverse the great mountain barrier of the Takht-i-Sulaiman, or Solomon's Throne, and reduced to submission the tribesmen who had hitherto defied us from the fancied security of their strongholds in this range.

The story is best told in White's own words, and without the detail of official despatches. The following are some letters which he wrote on the subject:—

To Lady White.

CAMP KARIA WASTA, *one march from Thamishpa, 14th October* 1890.

I think the expedition has been very well worked so far. It is not a very simple matter to keep pace with the changes in Sir R.'s mind & plans. For instance, he got a wire from the Foreign Office yesterday morning which made him change all his plans, & consequently mine; he expressed a wish to see me, & I rode 30 miles yesterday afternoon to meet him, & arranged fresh plans in accordance with his then views. This morning I had issued all orders on these revised plans when I got a signal from him by heliograph, which connects our camps, giving up the plans of last night & starting wholly new ones. This is a great bother to me, but as the considerations are nearly entirely political I have to accept his plans. It is all a capital exercise in soldiering. . . .

To Lady White.

CAMP NIGANDI ON THE KUNDAR, *17th October* 1890.

I have to-day planted the English flag on the Kundar, and it is but three years since I planted it on the Salween to the east of the Shan States.

We have had no adventures since I last wrote. I repeated

the march from Kuria Wasta to Thamispha, & left the last-named place this morning. We had a long march down to the valley of the Kundar, and are now very much lower, about 6000 ft., whereas Thamishpa was 7700 ft. I have marched the native troops without tents, and there was ice at Thamishpa, & I was anxious about the health of the men, as it is a severe change from a summer at Hyderabad in Sind to sleep out on the Biluchistan hills at an elevation of nearly 8000 ft. with the temperature below freezing. However, I have got rid of all weakly men now, & altho' we had an eighteen-mile march to-day, a great part of it over very heavy sand, not a man fell out. . . .

To Lady White.

ZHOB FIELD FORCE, CAMP KARAM,
16*th November* 90.

The last time I wrote I carried my letter myself to a place called Mogul Kot, where Sir Robert Sandeman had his Camp, as I wanted to meet him & confer with him about future operations. I found him as usual living in the most luxurious state, 14 at breakfast, with fresh butter, milk, &c., every place with a clean table-napkin.[1] Since last year, when I first saw the rocky heights of the Takht-i-Suliman, I have had a great desire to crown them, & from my talk with Sir R. Sandeman I thought the time was drawing near when the Field Force could be broken up; so the morning after my return to Nmur I started with 50 Yorkshires under Capt. Milton & 50 Biluchis under Major Creagh, and after 4 days of very hard work I am back in camp at the Punjab side of the Takht in my big tent, having taken the 50 Yorkshires & 50 Biluchis to the top of the Takht range.

From the top I wrote a heliograph message to you, "Have

[1] Sandeman could live as roughly as any one, but he thought it right to keep open house, and his Indian butler, "Mr Bux," was a famous character on the frontier.

been in bivouac for several days, & now heliograph from the top of the Takht to explain why I have not written." This message I meant to be sent by heliogram to a place near Dera Ishmael Khan, where it would have been conveyed by wire to you, but there was such a delay in sending it through that I was afraid to keep my signallers longer on the hill, as the descent was most dangerous, & I had far to go before night.

The first day of our march we started at daylight, and as we had mules we had to get them over the bad places. These were so numerous and such very awkward places that poor Milton and most of his men were benighted & slept out all night. We had nothing but our blankets with us, no tents. Next morning we got Capt. Milton in. He and his men had had no water since previous morning, and were very bad with thirst & fatigue, having worked very hard over hills like "Marda" all day long. Capt. Milton is the best regimental officer on Service I ever knew.

Next day we had quite as hard work, and in the afternoon we came to a place beyond which no mules could go. We then got the men to carry two blankets on their own shoulders and a day's food, & up we trudged again. We ascended 1300 more feet that evening up to about 7000 ft., & I then gave the order to shake down for the night. The Chokidar carried up for me one blanket, short poshteen, & poshteen boots. I had especially ordered a pillow, but it was, by accident or intention, forgotten, & I had only a stone. The night was intensely cold, with a high wind, about 20 degrees of frost, & I was anxious about a soldier who had been hurt by a falling mule & who got violent pains in his inside. I thought he would die, & this, combined with the cold, kept me awake all night.

Before daylight next morning, the 14th, I turned out the party. We had one or two small hand-mussacks carried by natives of the Takht hills. These were solid ice, & though they were carried by the hillmen on their necks & exposed to the morning sun we ate bits of solid ice out of them at 9.30 o'clock in the morning, & the water would not flow. The road

up was simply an ibex-hunter's climb, & I am most rejoiced to think none of the men were killed.

To Mrs Baly.

QUETTA, 15*th December* 1890.

The work of the Zhob Field Force, though I say it who should not, was very well done. It divided itself naturally into two phases: the first, the march round by the Kundar & the Gomal to assert our right to the territory which came to us when the Amir of Kabul allowed us to include all the Kakar tribes. There were many who thought we would meet with opposition or stir up the animosity of the Amir, but we got all round without any opposition, & with only one outrage; a grass-cutter, who had wandered too far from his guard, was cut up, probably an act of fanaticism. The difficulty was to carry supplies for the considerable force that I went with, the country being almost everywhere a desert. I had even to carry forage for the horses & mules. We managed it all, however, very satisfactorily, and I am sure the effect of our march will be to impress the tribes on that border with our power of moving up to their country in considerable force. I had 3000 camels with me. It was interesting to me to think that about 2 years before I had planted the British flag on the Salween, east of the Shan States, & this year had put it on the Western bank of the Kundar & the Gomal. We were inconvenienced by the want of water & by its bad quality. In many places it was quite salt, & made us very ill. The second phase was the march against the Sheranis, whose country lies close to the Takht-i-Suliman, and was considered to be inaccessible to troops. I had a good force of my own, & had been allowed a very free hand in detailing the corps I wished to have with me. Sir Fred. Roberts considerately also put under my command 3 troops of cavalry, a battery, and a battalion and a half of Native Infantry of the Frontier force. With this contingent I stopped the outlets from the Sherani country into the Derajat, and advancing myself from

the West or Biluchistan side, I had the Sheranis in the hollow of my hand. The country may be described truly as stupendous, but my troops were mostly hillmen, and as good as the Sheranis in their own hills. I thus managed not only to get all round the Sheranis, but I personally took a small force over the hills & got above their strongholds. When they knew that we had marched an army (fauj) where they only drive goats they knew the game was up, and all came in & salaamed. The plans made on the map and from conflicting native reports worked out very prettily on the landscape, and when I had crowned the heights above Nmur, the capital of the Kidderzai section of the Sheranis, with about 300 picked men, and the chiefs who had surrendered to me saw me communicating by heliograph with 3 other forces posted at opposite corners of their country, & ready to close on any point in it, they said that they were glad they had salaamed, & owned that they could not stand up against our power. The Punjab Frontier Force has for 40 years been looking at these hills, & I believe considering them too formidable to enter except for a hurried run to burn a village or so. The purdah has now been thoroughly lifted. As a bit of bye-play after the concerted operations were over I took 50 picked men of the Yorkshire Regt. & 50 Biluchis with me & made a 4 days' expedition, crowning the Takht i-Suliman, & from the top of it, which is regular ibex ground, heliographing all over the country to show the people that we could go where they could not drive their goats. . . . I do not believe the Home Military Authorities will think of me as C.-in-C., and I very much doubt if I would accept it if offered to me. It is a terrible grind both socially and professionally.

White summed up the progress and results of the expedition in an official despatch, which is too long to quote here. The 'Pioneer' newspaper referred to it in the following terms:—

We regret that we have not space sufficient in this issue to republish at length the official despatch of Sir George White, submitting an account of the operations in the Zhob Valley in November and December last. It is most unusually well-written, clear, graphic, and concise; it gives a very lucid description of the objects of the expedition, of the methods adopted to secure them, of the nature of the country, extremely difficult of access, and of the activity and endurance of the troops under the most trying conditions. . . . We can only say of this despatch that it is exactly what a despatch ought to be.

The despatches of a military commander may often be to some extent the work of his staff; but, as I have more than once pointed out, White was, like his chief, Lord Roberts, a laborious man, and wrote much with his own hand. He had now educated himself, or had been educated by the force of circumstances, into an excellent style. It was my good fortune to see the process going on in both cases, and I was struck by the way in which two men, neither of whom had, I think, any natural literary aptitude, learnt by thinking things out, and doing them, to put their thoughts on paper with a clearness and force which were really admirable. There is a certain quality in a style so acquired that makes it, to use a cant term, singularly "convincing."

The Zhob expedition was the only piece of active soldiering which White had to carry out during his tenure of the Quetta command, which was very much more peaceful than his troublous times in Burma. He remained in Beluchistan a couple of years longer, but the tranquillity of the great frontier province was

not seriously disturbed during 1891 or 1892, and he was able to devote himself to matters of less urgency.

I have already noted that there was plenty of work to be done, and that it included the study of the great question, how best to meet Russia in case of war. I see that in the summer of 1890, before the Zhob expedition started, White had been in correspondence with Sir Frederick Roberts and General Chesney on this subject, and had submitted to them a paper embodying his views. There is no necessity to reproduce this paper here, but it was well worked out, and has some interest as showing that his views had undergone considerable modification. I have mentioned in previous chapters of this book that during and after the Afghan war White had become strongly opposed to any wandering in search of a scientific frontier beyond the belt of independent mountain territory which bounds the Indus valley on the west. Now, after studying the question for a year in Quetta, he came to the conclusion that to meet a Russian attempt on India with the best prospect of success it would be necessary to advance beyond the passes and hold the Kabul-Kandahar line in Afghanistan. This was the beginning of a process in the course of which White became a thorough-going adherent of the Sandeman system of dealing with the frontier tribes in whose territory the passes lie. Whether he was right or wrong in his final opinion, it was one which came to him only as the result of prolonged study, ending in conviction. But this is anticipating.

Lady White had come out to Quetta in the late autumn of 1890, bringing with her a small daughter, and White's life had been made much happier in consequence. He never tired of his little girl's companionship, and his letters are full of her sayings and doings. I quote one as an example:—

To his eldest daughter.

QUETTA, 22*nd December* 90.

I was so much pleased to get your very pretty Xmas present, and as it had been so nicely painted by your own hand, it is doubly valued by me. I wish I had a photograph of you like the big one Mother has in the drawing-room to put into the frame. . . . Gladys has had such a lot of parties lately that she is quite blasé. She leads me a terrible life, & insists on being shaved every morning. The worst of it is that when she has had a good lather of soap on her chin she always bolts & shows herself to her Mother or the old nurse, & then I am scolded. I wish you could come out & keep her in order. . . .

The following are extracts from letters on other subjects written during White's stay in Quetta:—

To John White.

QUETTA, 19*th June* 91.

Locusts are playing havoc all round us & eating up every green thing. We have waged war against them, but they still march on. I saw, a few days ago, a patch of about 20 square yards covered with them, & advised the Pathan landowner to set to work to kill them, which was feasible. His answer was characteristic of the Oriental: "How can I fight against the Armies of God?" The locusts are in such numbers that they have several times stopped the train & delayed our mails a whole day. . . .

14*th November* 91.

I am told there is no truth in the 'Times' Correspondent's telegram that I had been recommended as next C.-in-C. It would be too great a compliment for me to expect with my rank, & standing in that rank. I wish, however, that my friends would not lead up to such telegrams from India. I had several letters from Simla saying I was a favourite for the C.-in-C.ship, & probably this is what has got hold of the reporter. . . .

QUETTA, 6*th December* 91.

I have to thank you for numerous scraps from yourself & cuttings from newspapers. I fear you take more interest in the affair than I do. I do not believe the Horse Guards would look at me. It would be an immense labour, & I don't covet it. . . . Sir G. Greaves is a very smart, clever little man, knows India thoroughly, and would do the work well. . . . If he gets it I think it probable I would be offered C.-in-C.ship Bombay, but really don't covet it a bit. . . .

Lord Dundonald was also here during the Chief's visit. He is a very nice fellow. I could not put him up, so quartered him on the Barnes,[1] who did him splendidly. He seems a great supporter of mine as next C.-in-C., & says he has asked everybody he has met throughout India who they go for, & that almost without exception my name was given him by all, & especially warmly by the Young 'uns, which I take to be a good compliment to my reputation for going ahead. . . .

Most of my time is now taken up answering applications for appointments on my staff & bids for my good offices when I am C.-in-C. I promise copiously "*when I am C.-in-C.*" . . .

To a sister.

QUETTA, 18*th Jany.* 92.

I was very sorry to hear poor old Brewster had passed away from Whitehall. He will create a great blank to me if ever

[1] Mr Barnes of the Indian Civil Service, now Sir Hugh Barnes, K.C.S.I., &c., was then Political Agent in Quetta.

I revisit it. I thoroughly liked the old man, & he was a sympathetic link with the past. Rest his soul. He was a faithful old servant. It will look less like welcome when the old hall-door is opened by another hand. I would gladly join in a monument to his memory in Broughshane Church. . . .

I have been much out of sorts, down constantly with ague & malarial fever, & am even now under positive orders to go to Karachi for change as the only way of getting it out of my system. . . .

The cold here is at its keenest, & the skies are to-day leaden & full of snow, my flag is half-mast for poor Prince Eddie—so the aspect of Quetta is not cheerful. . . .

It was a melancholy winter altogether, for in the course of it all Beluchistan was saddened by the untimely death of the man who had made the Province, Sir Robert Sandeman. He had found it necessary to make a tour in an outlying part of the country; and there, at Lus Bela, far away from his home, he was seized with an attack of pneumonia which proved fatal. White had learnt to appreciate his many fine qualities, and deeply regretted his death, as is shown by the following letter to Lord Roberts:—

QUETTA, 15*th Feby.* 92.

Lady Sandeman has borne up bravely, and is evidently struggling to do everything she thinks her duty. She has written very fully to my wife, and speaking of poor Sandeman she says, "He honoured all men & feared none," which I think a fine & justly earned epitaph.

It will be impossible to get another A.G.G. who can command the same amount of influence as he did. The Province had grown up under him, and his relation to the Chiefs was that of a father. By nature he was a man of very strong

personality, and he also had wide sympathy. The people both feared & liked him. Shortly before his death . . . he said to Lady Sandeman, "I cannot speak without the people," & when the Chiefs were admitted he took leave of them.

It was a fine end to a fine life, and Sandeman's name will long be remembered among the Chiefs and tribesmen for whom he had done so much. His death was a great loss to the Indian Empire.

About this time a chaplain in Quetta had apparently suggested that the soldiers in the church choir should wear surplices, and White's answer, both in its matter and its directness of manner, is very characteristic of him:—

QUETTA, 22*nd Feby.* 92.

DEAR MR ——,

I believe there is no vestment so worthy of respect & honour in service of all kinds, whether sacred or secular, as the uniform of an English soldier, & I therefore have the strongest objection to surplices.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

GEO. S. WHITE.

Shortly afterwards, in March 1892, Lady White and her daughter sailed for England, and White writes to her:—

QUETTA. *The day you left.*

I expect you will be glad to find a line at Bombay to tell you of Quetta after you left it. Well, I rode back quickly, the black horse carrying me very comfortably. The house seemed very lonely. Nobody to abuse me & no little voice

to say Fadder. However, I had anticipated not liking the look of it, so I had a parade at 11.30, & by the time I had breakfasted & got into my long blue coat it was time to be off. I had work nearly all the afternoon & tea by myself in the office. . . .

The following are a few more letters written by White during the course of the year:—

To Lord Roberts.

QUETTA, *5th June* 92.

I cannot realize that I have a chance of succeeding you, & though even the possibility is a dazzling prospect, yet it does not blind me to the fact that he who succeeds you as Chief in India comes to the post very heavily handicapped. If he does what you have done for the Armies in India, & keeps up the position of the head of those Armies with the Govt. of India which you have established, I shall be agreeably surprised. . . .

To Lady White.

QUETTA, 10*th July* 1892.

. . . I also heard from Miss Warrender, who wrote most cordially of you, & said you were looking younger instead of older. She has sent me the most interesting books I have ever read. I thought she would be in the way of reading & hearing of anything that was attracting attention, and really a book is a godsend to me. The weather now is at its hottest, and late in the evening I often go out for a ride, and come back to dinner & evening all alone, not having spoken to a soul from luncheon-time till bedtime. 'The Memoirs of Baron Marbot' is about the best book I ever read. Full of sufficiently graphic accounts of Napoleon's great wars, and of personal adventures & gossip about him & his principal marshals. . . .

I am carrying on a desperate flirtation with a young lady called Dorothy Lucas, eyes of cerulean blue, age about 5 years, & the jolliest little mortal. She is devoted to me, & when I do not turn up to have high jinks at the Club she makes enquiries of all the ladies "why George White not come." She often comes to tea with me, & always insists on coming home with me from the Club to drink "lemonlade" & rob the dessert table. The house has now extraordinary attractions for children. A young puppy, 3 young rabbits, a monkey, & three kittens. . . .

To Lord Roberts.

QUETTA, *7th August* 92.

The notes forwarded with your letter have interested me much, & given me subject-matter for very grave thought on the future of the Government of India. . . .

I note that the Finance Minister argues against the necessity of altering the existing proportion of British to Native troops in the prospect of meeting the Russians. If there is a need that is patent to every soldier who has fought alongside of Native troops or commanded a mixed force, it is the absolute necessity of increasing the proportion of the British element when we have the strain on us of fighting Russians, with its consequent hardships & losses. . . . Internal administration & developing the resources of the country as a substitute for Military preparation may be most effective measures towards removing the causes for natural war or rebellion such as we had to cope with in Burma, but when considered with reference to invasion by a power like Russia, they may be described as the increase of unprotected wealth; which means increasing the temptation which offers itself to the invader. This if carried to a certain point makes that temptation irresistible. The dogs of war run too fast to admit of gold being turned into iron and steel in time for action. Wealth cannot defend itself in modern war. In 1870 the resources & wealth of France were far greater than those of

Germany, but the result showed that wealth & internal development are absolutely at the mercy of the man who is stronger because ready armed.

I further look upon reliance on European allies as a most dangerous hope as regards Russia's advance on India. It is too far apart for the more Western European powers to recognise self-interest in taking part in it. On the contrary, a statesman of the cynical Bismarck school would gladly divert war from Germany by turning its tide eastward towards India in order to be saved the loss & expense of stemming it. . . .

To Lady White.

QUETTA, 20*th August* 92.

There has been so much said about me & the Chiefship that I have rather entered into the feeling of competition, but really in the abstract I think the cons & the pros are very equally balanced. . . .

To his daughter.

ZIARAT, BILUCHISTAN, 28*th August* 92.

I was much interested in your later dated 5th August. I quite agree with your views about Reubens. I think it was Mrs Beecher Stowe who said that all his figures looked to her as if they had "waxed fat & kicked." With all the world of fact before him, & the area of fancy, he seems to me to have deliberately chosen the coarse & the terrible. He was, of course, a wonderful colorist, but his works seem to me to want refinement always. . . .

I am enjoying myself amongst the juniper forests of Ziarat in a lovely cool climate. My hostess[1] is a capital specimen of an Irish girl, full of fun & mischief, but at the same time most kind & good. It is a sight to see her every morning dressing the hideous sores of the hill men, women, & children

[1] Mrs M'Mahon, now Lady M'Mahon, wife of the High Commissioner in Egypt.

who crowd to her house for medical aid. She does it all with her own hands.

To Lord Roberts.

ZIARAT, *2nd Sept.* 92.

I do not think your Lordship could have a better successor than Buller. He is a man that inspires confidence, and, with a man like Stedman, who knows the Native Army thoroughly, to advise him on points regarding it, we shall be very safe with Redvers Buller. He will maintain the position you have asserted for the C.-in-C. of the Army, & his very high reputation as a soldier will make his appointment a popular one with all. If I had the nomination of your successor I would certainly name Buller. I have often said so to my friends, but I did not think that he would leave England for any length of time. . . .

To Lady White.

QUETTA, *12th Sept.* 92.

Lord Roberts wrote to me, some time ago now, to tell me that Sir Redvers Buller was talked about as his successor. . . . I must say I think the arrangement would be the best possible for India. Redvers Buller is a strong man, inspires confidence, & has great home influence. Lord Bobs & T. D. Baker at the Horse Guards as the chief advisers of the Duke of Cambridge would make Indian requirements go up in the Home Military Market enormously. . . .

If I get neither Poona nor Simla I remain at Quetta (taking leave of course) until April 94; in 96 Ootacamund[1] will be vacant, & with Lord Bobs at the Horse Guards I ought to get it for a certainty. It is easy work, cheap, a good climate & nice houses, with the best servants in India, & I would prefer this to Bombay. India (Simla) would be a great work & constant drudgery & anxiety; Ooty would be a lounge to me. . . .

[1] The summer headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief in Madras.

Little Mrs M'Mahon is the best of hostesses, but led me a lot of dances over all sorts of dangerous ground. She climbs like a cat. She is so good & kind also that, combined with her very high spirits, she is a combination of great interest. . . .

White had not much longer to remain at Quetta, for the question of the Indian command was about to be settled, and in his favour. The close of November found him on his way to England for a short period of leave, and when he arrived at Suez he found awaiting him a telegram offering him the post in succession to Lord Roberts. Whatever his doubts had been, the offer was one which he could not have refused, and it was at once accepted.

The appointment was well received in England, and during his short stay White had every reason to be pleased with the welcome extended to him. On the 30th December he writes to Lord Roberts: "The Home Press has been extraordinarily favourable in its remarks," and the attitude of the Press was a correct index of the general feeling throughout the country, among such as were interested in Indian matters. It need hardly be said that in Ireland the feeling was specially strong. Antrim gave him a great reception at Belfast, with "an exceedingly handsome set of plate for the table," and he was made a Doctor of Laws of Trinity College, Dublin. He was naturally much gratified by all the honour shown to him, and though fully conscious that any man succeeding Lord Roberts must have a difficult task, he left England in good health and spirits, without any regret at his decision.

CHAPTER XXIV.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA.

1893-1898.

WHITE sailed for India in March 1893 to take up his command, Lady White accompanying him, and early in April he landed in Bombay.

It had been arranged that on his way up to Army Headquarters at Simla he should meet the outgoing Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, and talk over in person some of the questions with which he would have to deal. Lord Roberts was paying a farewell visit to the Rajput Chief of Jodhpur, and there he and White spent a short time together. It was not spent wholly in discussing affairs of State, for White's letters show that Maharaja Pertab Singh took them out pig-sticking, a favourite sport in Jodhpur. He writes to Miss Warrender:—

> The great Sir Pertab Singh got a fall. Just as he was approaching his boar, his horse fell, & he & the boar were mixed up together. The boar attacked him, & hurt him badly. Lord Roberts killed the boar. I never saw a man show such pluck. He would not allow he was hurt, although

he was covered with blood. These Rajputs of Jodhpur are about the oldest aristocracy in India, and have immense pride of race. They are really beautiful horsemen. . . .

The sport was new to White, for he had not served much in the parts of India where pig-sticking flourishes, but he greatly enjoyed himself, and he tells his brother, "I intend to take to it the next chance I have." He carried out his intention, but he was too hard-worked during the remainder of his stay in India to get many chances. Maharaja Sir Pertab Singh, in spite of his seventy years, is now serving personally in France.

"India," as White said, "is the great training-school for our army," and the Commander-in-Chief in India had a fine command—something like 300,000 men, of whom 70,000 were British. In these days of armed nations such numbers do not seem large, but twenty years ago the army in India was regarded as a very important part of our military strength, and indeed it has remained so until now.

The position of the Commander-in-Chief was in some respects a peculiar one. The "Government of India," as already shown, was a body consisting of about half a dozen members: the Governor-General in Council. It was as if the government of England were carried on by the King in person with the aid of a small Privy Council of five or six Secretaries of State. By the custom in India, if not by statute, the Commander-in-Chief had a seat in the Council, and when he was at Headquarters he shared in all its discussions. This imposed upon him much work with

which a soldier is not ordinarily called upon to deal, but it also gave him an opportunity of putting forward in the most effective way his views on all important military questions. If he had been the only military man with a seat in Council his position would have been a very strong one.

This, however, was not the case. The Government of India had a "military department," which was in fact the Indian War Office. The officers of this department, to use White's words, "while primarily considered civil and financial, are military men, and vote on all sorts of military subjects"; and the head of the department was one of the Council. As such, he had to consider any proposals made by the Commander-in-Chief to the Government of India, and if he was a man of ability and character he was apt, as White said, to become "practically the superior officer of the Commander-in-Chief." At all events there was evident room for friction between the military department and Army Headquarters, and friction had often taken place. The system was thoroughly discussed some years later, and modified; but when White became Commander-in-Chief the old conditions prevailed. Regarding them from the point of view of the army, he once went so far as to say that the military department were "the natural enemies of the Commander-in-Chief," and though he was an eminently reasonable man he had some sharp passages of arms with both the men who held the military membership in his day—Sir Henry Brackenbury and Sir Edwin Collen. Both, it may be added, were in

private life, then and for many years afterwards, on the most friendly terms with White.

With regard to the internal condition of the Indian Empire at this time, and its foreign affairs, the situation was not altogether satisfactory. The great fluctuations in the value of silver had brought about a period of financial depression and retrenchment which boded ill to the army. The Russians were showing a disposition to take high-handed action with the Amir of Afghanistan, who had occupied certain districts they regarded as beyond his treaty limits. The Amir himself was showing a very intractable spirit towards the Government of India, and it had become necessary to contemplate putting an embargo on his import of arms. Trouble also seemed to be brewing in the mountain territory of Chitral, to the north of India. It had been found necessary some years before to establish a British Agency in this part of the world, in order to prevent the spread of Russian influence among the mountain chiefships. The arrangement had been successful; as the Russians put it, "ils nous ont fermé la porte au nez"; but the country was a rugged and turbulent one, and required careful watching. Finally, within India itself a certain measure of agitation was arising on the old vexed question of cow-killing, which Hindus regarded with horror. As a member of Council, White had to study and form an opinion upon all these questions, and many more.

To help him in his military work he had an excellent staff. Major-General Galbraith, whom he had known in Afghanistan, was Adjutant-General; Major-General

Stedman, who had served with him in Burma, was Quartermaster-General; and as Military Secretary White had his brother officer Ian Hamilton of the Gordons. Major Beauchamp Duff, now Commander-in-Chief in India, was serving under Galbraith. One of the main points about to come before Army Headquarters at this time was the abolition of the old Presidency commands in Bombay and Madras, in order to bring the whole army in India more thoroughly under one control; and the mobilisation scheme demanded unceasing study.

White entered upon his new duties with his usual thoroughness. He was not fond of office work; but it had to be done, and he had never been the man to spare himself. He writes to Lord Roberts on the 10th May 1893 that the work was very constant, as many of the questions arising in Council were new to him, and required reading up. To his friend Miss Warrender he writes: "I am at the desk at 7.30 every morning, and rarely leave it till 6, or after it, in the evening." He found he had no time, except after dinner, to read the books she sent him, and then he was tired out and sleepy. This is one of the drawbacks of India, the incessant toil imposed upon the small number of Englishmen who have to drive the great machine. What Lord Dufferin called "the traditions of gigantic industry" prevailing in the Indian services are necessary for the control of an Empire of three hundred millions, but they mean much wear and tear.

I have more than once noticed that White's inclina-

tion was to avoid anything like a "Forward Policy" to the North-West, with the view of finding a scientific frontier and countering the advance of Russia. He had somewhat modified his views in this respect after studying the question in Beluchistan; and he now found on reading the papers in the Indian Foreign Office that his opinions were undergoing further change. On the 15th May 1893 he writes to his brother:—

> We can scarcely keep at peace with the Amir, & he will not follow our instructions. . . . I find myself drifting into the "forward policy" ranks from conviction on the questions that have come before Council.

I may explain here, at the risk of some repetition, that this question of the Forward Policy on the North-West Frontier has been much misunderstood. In the seventies, when Lord Lytton was Viceroy of India, there was a Forward Policy which contemplated certain extensive and adventurous schemes in Central Asia. That policy was brought to an end by the Afghan War of 1878-80, at the close of which we retired from Afghanistan, and came back, except at Quetta, behind the natural boundary of India, the long range of mountain territory which separates Central Asia from the Indian plains. We recognised a new Amir, and helped him to set up his authority throughout Afghanistan, only stipulating that he should have no dealings with foreign powers except through us, and promising to support him against unprovoked aggression. After that, we de-

marcated, in conjunction with the Russians, the border between his territory and the Russian dominions. There was therefore in 1893 no longer any question of our going forward into Afghanistan except in support of the Afghans.

At the same time the position was not a wholly satisfactory one for us. We had practically made ourselves responsible to Russia for the conduct of an ally over whom we had no very effective control; and further, we had no definite understanding with him for the management of the tribal mountain territory lying between our own territories and his.

This rugged mountain tract had always been practically independent of Afghanistan; and ever since the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 we had found it necessary to deal directly with its tribes, which lay upon the border of our districts and gave us much trouble. The claims of Afghan Amirs to suzerainty over these tribes, though often advanced, had been consistently repelled by us, and we had insisted upon our right to deal with them ourselves, irrespective of any such claims, for the simple reason that the Amirs had never been able to keep the tribes in order and prevent their raids upon our territory.

The so-called Forward Policy in 1893 consisted in this, that we should give up the old system by which we abstained from all interference with the tribes except when they raided us, and should endeavour, without necessarily annexing any part of their lands, to bring them under some measure of control, so that their raids should cease; and that if at any time we

found it necessary to send troops through the passes in support of Afghanistan, the tribes should help and not oppose us. It was thought desirable, in fact, to establish on the northern half of the frontier belt a position somewhat similar to that which Sir Robert Sandeman had established on the southern half. With this object it was evidently desirable in the first place to obtain from the Amir a definite admission that the tribes were outside his sphere of influence.

It happened that at this juncture the Russian Government pressed us, not for the first time, to insist upon the Amir's withdrawal from certain districts to the north of his dominions which they declared he had occupied in contravention of his Treaty engagements. It is unnecessary to go into the merits of this question, but Her Majesty's Government came to the conclusion that the Russians were within their rights, and that a British mission must be sent to the Amir to urge upon him the necessity for giving up the districts in question. Being at the time Foreign Secretary in India I was selected for the duty. I was informed that if a favourable opportunity occurred I might endeavour to come to an arrangement with the Amir regarding the various matters outstanding between him and the Government of India, but I was given clearly to understand that all such questions were secondary. The primary object of the mission was to bring about the abandonment of the districts claimed by the Russians; other matters were to be taken up only after the primary object had been accomplished, and then only if the Amir wished it. During the summer of 1893 the arrangements for

the mission were settled, and the Amir agreed to receive it. I believe that one main reason why he agreed was that we were to go up without escort, trusting to his protection and hospitality. A mission headed by Lord Roberts had been proposed to him a short time before, but as this was to be accompanied by a large escort, he had steadily evaded receiving it.

I have already mentioned White's comment upon a proposal to send a mission in 1888. He now cordially supported me in declining an escort. His knowledge of the Afghans made him understand that far from decreasing the danger, an escort would add to it. The last envoy and his escort had been massacred. To go without an escort was, White wrote, "a much safer plan."

To his brother White writes on the 28th August 1893:—

ARMY HEADQUARTERS, INDIA,
28th August 1893.

I have had a busy day, 11 hours work and a table full of files not yet registered. Their variety of subjects is marvellous, from the amusements that are suitable & fit for a lady nurse to indulge in to great questions of State policy.

I send you rather an interesting discussion on paper of the principle that ought to be followed in settling the land in India. My note, I know, has attracted considerable attention. I never expected that those exceedingly disagreeable days I spent down at Cushendall making my own land settlements would turn out a useful education towards administering the Civil Government of India. . . .

The principal matter before us at the present time is the Mission to Kabul. Sir Mortimer Durand has charge—thank God it is not Sir George White. By a treaty made by Lord

Granville (1873) we agreed to consider the Panjeh or Southern branch of the Oxus the Northern boundary of Afghanistan. I believe this was done by us in complete ignorance of the geography of the district. We called the boundary the Oxus, but unfortunately added from the source in the Sir-i-Kul or Victoria Lake—this fixes it as the Southern branch or Panjeh. Since 1873 Abdur Rahman has conquered & occupied—against our advice certainly—provinces north of the Panjeh, & Russia has now challenged his right to remain there, & demanded the fulfilment of our agreement. The Government (Gladstone's) say they must abide by the letter of the 1873 agreement, & it is to break this to the savage Abdur Rahman that Durand has to go to Kabul. . . .

Abdur Rahman was not in reality so savage as he was supposed to be. The terrible punishments he inflicted upon his people had gained him the reputation of being a bloody tyrant; but he had a difficult and dangerous position to hold, and if he was fierce and pitiless at times he was not wantonly cruel. I found him a most courteous host, and remarkably straightforward in matters of business, much more so than some western rulers and diplomatists with whom I have since had to deal.

The results of the mission were twofold. After a fortnight's negotiation the Amir agreed to withdraw from the disputed districts in the north, and he then insisted upon entering upon the various questions outstanding between him and the Government of India, which questions indeed he had wished me to discuss first. In the end he formally accepted as the eastern and southern frontier of his dominions and sphere of influence a line which left us free to deal as we pleased

with all the independent tribes of the mountain belt bordering upon Indian territory. This is the so-called Durand line, to which White often referred in his later correspondence. We were in no way committed to advance westward up to it, but the Amir was bound not to interfere beyond it eastward. The principle upon which we had insisted for more than forty years had now been formally conceded. White's comment was that the mission had "had success beyond my most sanguine expectation."

This matter settled, White started for a long cold weather tour of inspection in the Punjab and elsewhere. He was weary of the office work at Simla, and he wrote, "I enjoy being with troops again." He visited among other places his first station in India, Sialkot, to which he had come as a young subaltern nearly forty years before. Then he went on to a rifle-meeting at Meerut, and from there to Bareilly for some duck and snipe shooting, White getting "top bag for any one day," and so to the Native State of Nepal, the home of the Gurkhas, where the Maharaja proposed to give him some tiger-shooting. White writes to Miss Warrender on the 26th December 1893:—

NEPAL, 26*th December* 1893.

I arrived here on Sunday the 24th, and was received by Sir Bir Shamshir in uniform. He is a nice-looking round-faced man of about 35. Shortly after he had gone I received the usual present, every sort of produce, a wild pig in a cage, jungle fowl, pheasants & partridges, also in cages, Thibetan goats with the softest pushmena (or under hair like wool). According to Eastern etiquette I returned Maharajah Bir

Shamshir's visit in about an hour, & while I was sitting in his durbar tent he announced that his men had marked a panther down within a couple of miles of the Camp, & asked if we would go & shoot it. Altho' it was Sunday we thought it was right to destroy so dangerous a neighbour, & we accordingly all went out headed by the Maharajah & found a ring of elephants regularly round a patch of jungle in which the panther was lying. I got the first bullet into him, so his skin is mine, & I shall hope to show it to you some day. . . . It was evening when we got the panther, & we got him on the banks of a fine river just as the sun was setting. There must have been 2 or 3 hundred elephants out, & to see these breaking up & returning to their various camps, across the river, was one of the best scenes I have ever witnessed. Next day was Xmas, & we started out shooting at 10 o'clock. The Nepalise tie up young buffaloes in places where they think it likely a tiger will come, & when there is a kill it is immediately reported to Headquarters. On Xmas a kill had been made, & when we arrived with about 3 or 4 hundred elephants within about a mile of the place, we were halted & the Shikaris & trackers were sent on to reconnoitre. I asked leave to accompany them, as I wanted to see the way they worked it. We soon came on the unmistakeable footprints of a tiger, & it led us to where Stripes had killed the calf. He had dragged the carcase into thick jungle, which they always do, & the Shikaris said he would not be far off if he was not disturbed. We then went back to the Maharajah & found a very long line of elephants. Another line is formed to work in the opposite direction. The tiger, hearing a line of elephants crashing through the forest, moves quietly away until he finds the same bar to his progress from the opposite quarter, & by this time the flanks of the two lines have inclined towards each other & the tiger is encircled. The circle is then drawn in until the elephants are packed close together & standing head to head in the centre. The tiger is then likely to charge, & he has done so in the three instances I have seen; but though the

elephants trumpet and retire a little, curtseying towards the charging & roaring tiger, they have not broken the circle & the tiger has retired. When he charges, & consequently shows himself, is the time to get a shot at him, but as he is generally bounding through grass or jungle as high as the elephant, it is not easy to hit him. On Xmas day Dick-Cunyngham got the first bullet into him, and I finished him, but the skin goes to the first shot that hits, so the trophy is his. The tiger was a fine one, 9 ft. 10½.

The next day another kill was reported, & after tactics of the same sort I secured a magnificent male tiger 10 ft. 2, very fairly measured. The tiger charged twice roaring grandly, but did not actually charge the elephants.

To-day, 27th, we had information of another kill, & ringed a fine tigress, who also failed to break the circle, & who was knocked over by Colonel Hamilton, & finished by a second shot from his rifle. . . .

It is a most wonderful thing to see a line of 2 hundred elephants enter a forest which looks perfectly impenetrable from the great trees close together & the continuous tangle of branch & parasitic growth. As the line advances there are reports like file firing as the elephants break branches with their trunks so as to make way for the howdahs, or by the united efforts of head & foot crash down the smaller trees that bar their progress. The style of tiger-shooting I have described to you is peculiar to Nepal; nowhere else have they elephants in sufficient numbers to carry out the plan. We have now been out four days & have succeeded in killing a panther & three tigers without losing one. The Maharajah's brother told me they have over 400 elephants in & about our camp. . . .

It was a very enjoyable Christmas, the more so perhaps because the small party of Englishmen were all 92nd men—Ian Hamilton, Dick-Cunyngham, and

the British Resident in Nepal, Major Wylie, who had belonged to the Regiment.

From Nepal White came down to Calcutta for his first season as Commander-in-Chief. There was not, so far as I can gather from White's papers, any matter of urgent importance calling for his attention now that the Afghan troubles seemed to be in a fair way of settlement; but there was the usual routine work, and a small expedition on our eastern frontier against the Abor tribe, and much riding and entertaining, for which Lady White had a capacity amounting to genius. White thoroughly enjoyed the season, though it was clouded by the departure of the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne. On the 6th February 1894 White writes to Miss Warrender :—

I like Calcutta much better than I had expected. There is always plenty to do & to see. This makes it a refreshing change after the monotony of Simla. In fact there are so many inducements to idle that it requires one to put pressure on to devote the necessary number of hours to study. The climate is very pleasant, particularly in the early mornings, and I always manage to have two hours on horseback, generally from 7 to 9. The racecourse is quite close to my quarters, and there is a circle devoted to the public where the Calcutta world turns out in great force. I generally ride there three or four horses every morning, & I have a nice lot. Once a week Calcutta turns out to a paper-chase. There is a course, two to three miles, with made jumps, some of them hurdles, and there is a prize given at the end of the season for the best average place at the finish. As you may imagine it is a regular steeplechase, and as 80 or 90 people start, & the jumps are very narrow, it is rather a dangerous form

of sport. I wonder a lot of people have not been killed from the performances I have seen. Several ladies go out & ride in the most break-neck fashion. There is to be a steeplechase over the course for ladies for a cup given by Lord W. Beresford, & there will be very hard riding for it.

The country round Calcutta is green & nice for both rides & drives. Calcutta has not yet put off her mourning for the departure of the Lansdownes. I have never seen such genuine feeling shown at the departure of any Viceregal pair. It was universal, & equally distributed between the two. Lord L.'s constant courtesy & patience on all business matters, coupled with a thorough mastery of the details of all questions, made him not only looked up to but very much liked. He no doubt was delighted to feel himself free from office as Viceroy, with the many questions of vital importance which attach to it at the present time. Lady L. was really sorry to leave Calcutta. She thoroughly enjoyed all the social gatherings, did her part perfectly, & has left behind her the lasting affection of all who came in contact with her. . . .

In the same strain White had written to the Duke of Cambridge a few days earlier:—

31st Jany. 94.

We have just lost the most popular Viceregal pair I have ever known in this country. Lord Lansdowne has done his work with such honesty of purpose & straightness that he has won everybody to himself personally, even though opposed to him politically. He has had an exhaustive grasp of the business of the country, & has shown the greatest consideration & kindness for all who have been brought into contact with him. The natural grace with which Lady Lansdowne helped him in his social duties made up a combination very rarely met with. . . .

White's words were by no means exaggerated. Lord Lansdowne had come to India immediately after

one of its most popular and able Viceroys, Lord Dufferin, whose place had not been easy to fill, and this perhaps made his success the more remarkable. Lord Lansdowne now handed over his great office to Lord Elgin. It had been offered to a distinguished Indian officer, Sir Henry Norman,[1] who with rare unselfishness had refused it, on the ground that at 67 he was too old. Lord Elgin had then been induced to go out.

Before the close of the Calcutta season White paid a visit to Darjeeling, a "hill station" in the Eastern Himalayas. His journey was somewhat exciting, for he tells Miss Warrender in a letter of the 26th February that he woke up in the middle of the night to find the roof of his railway carriage on fire.

> Seeing that I had no chance of attracting attention I bent my efforts towards choking out the fire, and at the sacrifice of our bedding, with which one always travels in India, I managed to put it out. Luckily it was only the varnish that had caught fire & I was able to get it under. The fire had originated at the lamp, & the whole of the lamp-hole was in flames, but by shutting all the windows & doors, and cramming all the blankets as tightly as I could stuff them up the hole, I kept the fire from breaking out below until we arrived at a station & got hands to help us. . . .
>
> From the foot of the hills to Darjeeling there is a railway (narrow gauge) which serpentines in a most marvellous manner. The train passes under a bridge, serpentines round & up so as to pass over it in another couple of hundred yards. All along the line the undergrowth is very luxuriant and

[1] Afterwards Field-Marshal Sir Henry Norman, G.C.B., &c.

much more ideally Indian than the low hills on the road to Simla. There is also the variety lent to the hills leading up to Darjeeling by the number of hills which are cultivated as tea gardens. The people are quite different from those met in the Simla hills & those to the north of it. They are very Mongolian in type; & some of the tribes, notably the Lepchas, are very fair, with red colouring of the cheeks showing very plainly below their brown skins. On Sunday we had a great fair here, & the varieties of costume, feature, & physique were most interesting, but, unlike other parts of India I know, the type of all is the broad-featured type of Central Asia.

Darjeeling is a pretty place with magnificent snow views, but unfortunately it has rained or been cloudy ever since we arrived. The greatest feature is the Mountain KINCHINJANGA which is directly opposite, and which is 28,156 ft. high. I got one glimpse of it this morning for a minute as its grand head cleared the clouds for a very short time, but the cloud curtain dropped again & shut out everything. The climate is much milder here than at Simla; 30° is about the lowest known here, whereas at Simla, which is the same height, there is snow & ice for weeks; some years it lies for months. Already here there are large rhododendron trees covered with the white flowers which blow so splendidly in the Himalayas.

When I left Calcutta it was getting very hot, & I fear it will be worse when we return on Wednesday next. I have had terrible bad luck with my horses. "Welcome," my first charger, had turned out a capital fencer, & I rode him several times in the paper-chases near Calcutta, which is the only form of hunting we can get up, but the ground is now terribly hard & the plough is like so many boulders. Poor old Welcome must have jumped on some hard & uneven surface, as he has injured the tendons of his foreleg & has been condemned to be fired. Ten days ago I would not have taken £250 for him. My second best hunter, a mare called "Lassie," has injured herself in exactly the same way, but in a lesser degree, & has to be blistered. Isn't it bad luck? Sympathise with me, as

my horses are my greatest amusement. I have got a nice grey arab for which I paid a long price in Bombay, & which Amy rides. He is 15 hands high, which is tall for an arab, & very powerful, but still wants more breaking. We are in all the agonies of trying to meet the worst financial crisis India has ever passed through. The fall of the rupee has caused a terrible deficit, which it is now the problem to meet by taxation or other means. Fierce attacks will be made on the expenditure on the Indian Army, but I hope to keep it up to its present strength, though I have to give up all hope of getting many things which under any ordinary circumstances ought to be done.

You ask me for my speech at Meerut, but I have not got a copy. I am so careless about keeping records. I wish I could imitate your energy & perseverance & keep regular records, or get others to keep them for me, but somehow I never do.

White was about the last man to suppose that his life would ever be written. Perhaps if he had been less modest he would have mended his ways, in common humanity to his biographer.

On the road up to Simla White had some more shooting in the jungles of the Terai, the wooded belt below the Himalayas. He writes to Miss Warrender on the 20th April:—

Altho' the hot weather may be said to set in on the 1st April in the N.W. Provinces, the Terai was wonderfully cool. The water lies near the surface, it is well wooded, & the nights were actually cold. After the rains it would be certain fever, & very probably death, to live for 10 days in these jungles; but at the commencement of the hot season there is little malaria. We all took prophylactic doses of quinine, & none of us caught fever. Our sport was disappointing: we

only got three tigers & a panther & a very few head of deer. Those who knew the Terai best expected much more, but I suspect too many licences have been granted to natives to keep guns to coexist with an increase in game. The method of shooting is different from that I described to you in Nepal. We had this time only 50 elephants, and had to beat in line through the jungle in hopes of finding a tiger. We did not even resort to the usual device of tying up young buffaloes to ascertain if there were tigers in particular neighbourhoods. The jungles are beautiful at this season, & though it is very hot sitting in a howdah all day long under a burning sun, there is great enjoyment in the holiday & in the open air.

One tiger gave us some sport. He was wounded by one of the party, and charged the line of pad elephants, mauling two. He sprang on to the head of one elephant, on whose back there were two natives, and dragged him down on his head. I was just in front & could not fire, & saw the tiger, elephant, & his two riders apparently go down together in the long grass. One of the guns, who got a more favourable shot, actually hit the tiger while he was on the head of the elephant, and the latter then let go hold, but it took ten bullets to finish him. The last day I was in the Terai I was forward stop gun; the line of elephants was beating up to me & was not more than 400 yards off when I heard the most piteous cries from the jungle close to me. The sportsman in the howdah with me, my loader, whispered to me, "That is the tiger killing a hog deer." Stripes must have heard the beaters just after he had killed, as he moved forward towards me, & I had the satisfaction of putting the first bullet into him. In half an hour after I had heard the bleating the hog deer & the tiger were lying side by side on one of the pad elephants. The tiger had evidently sprung on the hindquarters of the deer & killed it, but had not commenced to eat it. One of the dangers of working through the jungle is the chance of disturbing a bees' or hornets' nest. We had two or three alarms. Officers shooting carry blankets in their howdahs,

& the moment the bees are understood to be attacking, everybody within reach covers himself over with his blankets & waits till the bees leave them. Men are constantly very badly injured by bees in this way, & some have even been stung to death. . . .

To Miss Warrender.

SIMLA, 22*nd May* 1894.

Here we are again settled at Simla after having had a very pleasant time at Mushobra. Although Kenilworth (the place at Mushobra) is very little higher than Snowdon, still it stands so much alone & is so much deeper in the hills, it has a much fresher feel. Kenilworth is a new house, & the gardens have been tastefully laid out & carefully kept up, so that when one stands in the verandah facing a hundred pinnacles of aged snow it is not only the sense of sight that is gratified, but the surrounding air is fragrant with the sweet scent of roses, honeysuckle, & jasmine. While we were there Amy organised Sunday luncheon parties, which were a great success, I think. People like to get out of Simla on Sunday, & Kenilworth is not more than 7 miles along a good road most of the way. Luncheon in the open amongst pine-woods & under the shade of a Shemianah (a flat-topped tent without side walls) lends an air of picnic, & yet we are near enough to the kitchen to have things hot. Luncheon takes up a certain time, & then walks through the pine-woods, back to tea, & the Simla people depart. This makes up a very pleasant afternoon. . . .

Thank you so much for sending me Wolseley's life of Marlborough. I have only read a few chapters as yet, but they are enough to show how very widely W. had studied his subject before he commenced to write—I believe he had made it the labour of many years. . . .

I often think of ending my days in a climate where one is nearly always in bodily comfort & where money goes three or four times as far as it does in England. . . .

9th May 94.

The number of ill-disposed agitators is, however, I am sorry to say, rapidly increasing in India. These, for their own personal ends, keep up the dangerous excitement, and there is an uneasy feeling abroad. I believe our worst enemies amongst the natives are those who have been educated in England, and have picked up socialistic and seditious ideas there, and think they can use them as a stock-in-trade here.

To Miss Warrender.

SIMLA, 19*th June* 1894.

Our lives have been uneventful of late. Constant work for me, varied by the small society meets, which can scarcely be looked upon as amusement by a man entering on his 60th year. I ought perhaps to consider myself lucky that I have the great pleasure left to me of being able thoroughly to enjoy long rambles & steep climbs about these grand & beautiful hills. These walks are really my greatest pleasure & relief from work, & I indulge in them to such a degree that I have reduced my weight from 13 st. 10 lbs., which I was at Calcutta, to 12 st. 3 lbs.

I generally take these rambles alone, with my thoughts as my companions & the hills as my friends. . . .

The tree-daubing still goes on, & is indeed spreading. Nobody seems to understand it, but it is accepted as a sign made by Hindus to Hindus to be on the look-out. I do not myself believe that those that daub could say what their handwriting on the tree means, but it creates uneasiness, a state of expectancy, & in some minds positive alarm, & therefore is a danger. . . .

The great danger to our rule in India is the attempt to graft on to Imperialism the liberal ideas that obtain in England. Imperialism is the only form of Government under which our hold on India can exist.

A free press does a good deal of harm at home, especially in Ireland; but a free press in India, with a licence to abuse the Government & bring the Governors into contempt, is an absolute danger. We rule ignorant, deeply religious, & fanatical people, capable of being moved to frenzy at very short notice. Vernacular papers that say we are striking at the root of the Hindu religion certainly pave the way for an exhibition of this frenzy, & may even bring it about. Yet our more enlightened & liberal rulers in this land dread what will be said & written in England if we muzzle the press. The difference between English ideas & Indian realities on this point is that a match is a very harmless thing in the streets of London, but it becomes a very great danger if struck in a powder-magazine.

To John White.

SIMLA, 26.6.94.

We have now a grand chance of annexing the most troublesome province on our border, "Waziristan." Amir of Kabul asks us to do it. Waziris, tired of bloodshed & insecurity of property, invite us. Yet these Honble. Colleagues of mine say "No," we will try first what "influence" will do. It will do what it always has done in the East if unbacked by close connection and a strong force, that is, lead to extravagant wars instead of the economy aimed at, and a continuance of raids, murders, & thefts where we aim at peace.[1]

Have not been walking so much of late, but did a good day's work yesterday. Left Kenilworth, our Mushobra villa, at 12 noon—very hot—walked down 3000 ft. to bottom of valley & up 2400 to Snowdon, with a companion who was not as fit as I, so I had to wait for him; arrived Snowdon, dripping with sweat, 3 P.M., worked for 2½ hours &

[1] In a later letter about the frontier tribes White talks of "the d—d shadow called British influence." He fully recognised Sandeman's influence, but that, though founded on conciliation, was "backed by close connection and a strong force."

walked back, *i.e.*, down 2400 ft. and up 3000, to Kenilworth, time 1 hour & 50 minutes. I am proud of this, as next week I celebrate my 60th birthday.

Just heard of Carnot's murder. The sedition that my Hon. Colleagues do not think it wise to stop the dissemination of in the native press will soon produce the same or like effects. . . .

To Miss May White.

SIMLA, 1*st July* 1894.

There is such a funny little girl here. . . . She met me a few days ago & she shouted to me, "Hullo! You did not wait at your house to carry me up the stairs pig-a-back." Then she gave me a scolding & said, "Now I must say good-bye. Give my love to Lady White." . . .

White's love for children did not exclude a love of animals. For example, in another letter to one of his daughters he writes: "I have a dear little cat, it sits behind me on my chair in my office, and it generally sits in the middle of the cushion and puts me on the edge of the chair." He was a ready victim to anything small and weak.

I notice that in the course of this season at Simla, White writes strongly to the Duke of Cambridge regarding the question of temperance in the Army. It was a question which always interested him, for his long regimental service had taught him the great importance of it. He was now able to report that practically a third of the British army in India were total abstainers.

I know [he wrote] there are some who doubt whether temperance is an unmixed good, but I hold strongly that

nearly all the crime amongst our soldiers in India is directly or indirectly the consequence of drink; and consequently that increase of temperance means decrease of crime.

He went on to prove his point from the Court-martial returns. Further, he argued from the health statistics that nearly half the sickness in the British army was traceable to drink. To the end of his life he held these views, and did his best for the temperance movement in the army, though he was not a teetotaler himself, or an advocate of complete abstinence in ordinary circumstances.

Among his many letters to the new Viceroy, Lord Elgin, during this year, was one which, though too long and detailed to quote, is worth mentioning, because it brings out a characteristic of his — the dislike to hearing men too readily criticised for their action in the field. Knowing war, he knew how uncertain a game it is, and how easily a man may get into trouble. There had been some tendency to throw blame upon the officer who had commanded in the small Abor expedition, a Captain in civil employ, and to deprive him and his subordinate, a Lieutenant, of any reward for the courage and capacity they had shown. Though they had not been under his orders, White takes up the case of these two young officers in a letter extending to six pages, and warmly urges that they should be generously treated.

All commanders [he writes] are liable to make mistakes, and there would be few rewards given if they were confined to those who had exercised faultless command.

This is sound doctrine. There is nothing easier than to criticise the conduct of military operations, and nothing harder for a civilian who has not seen fighting than to realise the countless difficulties, physical and mental, under which such operations have to be carried out. White's term of office as Commander-in-Chief was to be marked by several frontier expeditions of a somewhat serious nature; and it was fortunate for all concerned that they had in him a Chief who was so sure to back them. He could be severe towards any man who seemed to him self-seeking, or wanting in forwardness as a soldier; but to the man who did his best he was always generous; and the result, a very valuable result, was that he gave confidence to all who acted under him.

The first of the serious frontier expeditions was one against the Waziris, a large and troublesome tribe who already had many offences to their account. In the autumn of 1894 they made a sudden attack upon a small British force which was demarcating the boundary between them and Afghanistan. They were beaten off with loss, but it was necessary to punish them, and a force of several brigades had to be employed for this purpose under Sir William Lockhart, who was then in command of the Punjab Frontier Force. Lockhart had distinguished himself in Burma, and had also gained an exceptional knowledge of the North-West Frontier tribes. In his determined hands the Waziris soon found themselves powerless, and they

submitted without further fighting of any importance. White writes to his wife at this time:—

I have not allowed any of my staff to go to Waziristan. They have their advantages in good berths and pleasant quarters, and I am determined to give the advantages of service to those who have to bear the heat and burthen of the day.

Doubtless a good principle, but one against which White had chafed hotly when he was on Lord Ripon's Staff.

The trouble caused by the Waziri expedition was not of such a nature as to engross White's energies, and during this autumn he accompanied Lord Elgin on a visit to the Khyber Pass, and to Quetta and Lahore, where there was a fine review of British and Indian troops.

I think I gave them the finest show ever held in India [White writes to his wife]. The Highland Brigade looked very well, and of course I have a particularly warm corner in my heart for them.

During the Simla season he had had a heavy fall, his horse rolling over with him, and severely hurting his left shoulder, which interfered with his shooting. But he was otherwise in good health and spirits, and he had taken a strong liking to the new Viceroy. Lord Elgin, he wrote, was gathering strength. "He is very industrious and capable, and I believe thoroughly honest and public-spirited." The relations between the two steadily improved as time went on, which was not surprising; for though they

regarded many matters from a totally different point of view, both were moderate and reasonable men, and each was able to appreciate the straightforward character of the other. Some years later, not long before their connection came to an end, White wrote: "I have the greatest regard for Elgin—straight, clever, and considerate."

In December 1894 White was back in Calcutta, and as usual enjoyed himself.

> Calcutta is more interesting than Simla [he writes]; one can ride and drive here, and in Society one meets others besides officers of the Indian Civil and Military Services. . . . I enjoy my time more here than anywhere else in India.

His enjoyment was very largely due to his keen participation in the paper-chases, which meant galloping and jumping of an exceptional type, and a rather reckless one. How hard White went may perhaps be gathered from the fact that at one time he had five disabled horses on his hands. And he was in his sixtieth year.

A visit to Assam and some shooting brought the season to a close, and then White had to face the second of his serious frontier expeditions. To the extreme north of our mountain protectorates lies the little state of Chitral. Early in 1895 the territory of Chitral was invaded by an adventurer from the neighbouring tribal country, and it became evident that armed help might have to be sent. It was a troublesome question, for to get at the country with any considerable force it would be necessary to pass

through the territory of powerful tribes which might combine against us. But the invader of Chitral proved to be so strong, attacking and shutting up in the Fort the British Political Agent, Dr Robertson, with several other British officers, and about 400 Indian troops, that the expedition had to be undertaken. Luckily the trouble in the Waziri country had now come to an end.

The command of the Chitral relief expedition was entrusted to Sir Robert Low,[1] who like Lockhart had commanded a brigade under White in Burma, and was a man of varied service.

From the first there was rather heavy fighting, the tribes gathering in large numbers against our advancing force, and necessitating the employment of several brigades. The force with General Low himself was limited by difficulties of transport, but comprised eight battalions of Infantry, of which four were British.

It would serve no useful purpose to describe in detail the conduct of this expedition, which attracted much attention in England. But Chitral was gallantly defended for six weeks, and was then relieved, the whole affair being excellently managed.

The result was the opening up of a direct road from British territory to Chitral, and the decision, after much debate, to retain that place in permanent military occupation. This was a remarkable advance in our dealings with the frontier tribes, for it involved the establishment of control over territories hitherto closed to us.

[1] Afterwards General Sir Robert Low, G.C.B.

In September 1895 White paid a flying visit to the Relief Force. He writes to his brother:—

SNOWDON, SIMLA, *25th Sept.* 95.

I was much pleased with all I saw. I have never seen a campaign where everything had been so well provided for, or which was run on such large lines in proportion to its strength. The engineering work was especially good. The roads & bridges excellent. By a lucky chance our force crossing the Malakand pass when we first went up hit upon an old Buddhist road which had become quite disused, but which, with a little repair, turned out a very perfect one. It must be near 2000 years old, and was originally hewn out of the solid rock. How these people did such a piece of work is a problem. Our Engineer officers complain that the rock there now is so hard that it turns the edges of all jumpers they use to make holes for the explosives. I altered all the arrangements that had been proposed for the permanent occupation of the Malakand. As I insisted on my own views, which were opposed to nearly all my staff, I have taken a great responsibility on myself, & shall be very freely called a d—d fool if anything goes wrong. I am convinced, however, that it is sound military policy to keep every possible man for work in your fighting line, & and not to use them up in fortifications even on obligatory points. I simply knocked off half of all the garrisons proposed, so if you hear that Chakdarra or the Malakand have been taken by storm you know whom to blame. . . .

Meanwhile Lady White had gone to England and had returned, bringing with her three daughters, so that White once more had his family about him. He writes to Miss Warrender:—

KENILWORTH, MUCHOBRA, *25th October* 95.

We are having absolutely perfect weather out here now. Kenilworth is 7800 ft., and the nights are very cold, but

the days are bright & the sun warm; at the same time it is a delight to be out & walking all day long. I often start very early, before daylight, & take long climbs & meet the children in some selected spot under the deodars for breakfast. They love it, and after 5 hours on the hillside it is very pleasant to rest "stretched out beneath the pine," or often in the strong sunlight to counteract the very cold wind. . . .

The work was slack, & I enjoyed wandering over the hills immensely. Most of the people know me, and my appearance alone is greeted by a suppressed titter. I fear I shall be recalled to the memory of the hill populations round Simla as "the mad Lord Sahib." They cannot imagine a big man taking hard exercise to amuse himself, & it is equally impossible for them to suppose that a high official can go about without a numerous retinue. When they know me their invariable questions are, "Where are your horses?" "Where are your servants & army?" . . .

In the autumn, leaving Simla and his beloved mountains, White went down to the south of India to visit the military cantonment of Secunderabad; and after paying a visit also to the great Indian Chiefs of Hyderabad and Mysore, returned to Calcutta.

The Commanders-in-Chief in Madras and Bombay had now been abolished, and the Indian army was on its altered footing, under one Commander-in-Chief, with four Lieutenant-Generals subordinate to him. White had therefore to get a new system into working order, which involved some difficulties. His main care in these circumstances was to insist upon the central control, and to prevent the several armies from drifting into the hands of his bugbear, the Military Department. On this point he writes to Sir William Lockhart, whom he regarded as the man most likely

to succeed him when his term as Commander-in-Chief should come to a close :—

There is a tendency to let the control drift to the Military Department, and our army would then become a political one. Four armies largely decentralised from the Commander-in-Chief, and dependent on the Military Department on all financial questions, which always give immense control, would not be a satisfactory inheritance for you to succeed to as C.-in-C. Be careful not to sow the storm, for it is you who are most likely to reap the whirlwind.

But the whole situation has now been so completely changed that this question is not worth pursuing.

The year 1896 was not one of special importance in White's life. The Waziri and Chitral expeditions had apparently satisfied for a time the tribes of the North-West Frontier, and little trouble arose on that side.

On the 16th June White writes to his brother :—

SNOWDON, SIMLA, 16.6.96.

I have just completed the first relief of the garrison of Chitral *viâ* the Malakand, Dir, & Chitral. I refused to send a gun with them, & the infantry have marched along a road kept in repair & guarded by levies from the dreaded tribes that were to swallow up all my soldiers. Not a shot has been fired, & the baggage & everything but the ammunition & treasure has been carried by tribal carriers at contract rates. This is a pretty good triumph for Lord Salisbury's change of the policy ordered by the late Government. . . .

It may be explained that the Liberal Government had intended to withdraw from Chitral.

To John White.

SIMLA, 30*th June* 1896.

The girls are well & very bright. The father is in the hardest exercise, & generally *runs* ½ to 1 mile daily before

breakfast, winding up with 1000 ft. (not at a run) straight up the highest hill within reach. Age 61 on Monday next, weight 11 st. 10½ this morning—have been 13 st. 10½. . . .

It was a pleasant Simla season, and White enjoyed himself. Entering keenly into all the interests and amusements of his children, and the young officers of his staff; with his house always full of guests, as he loved to have it; and not too hard worked to find pleasure in society outside,—he seemed, and was, thoroughly happy—perhaps happier than he had ever been.

Simla, too, was full of old friends about this time: Badcock the Commissary-General, a cheery and excellent officer, whom White had known in Afghanistan; General Gatacre, of whom White always thought very highly, as a most careful and yet bold soldier; Gerald Morton, the accomplished Adjutant-General; Penn Symons; Scott Chisholme of the 5th Lancers, afterwards killed at Elandslaagte; "Jack" Sherston, who fell at Talana; and many others.

But White had now to prepare an Indian force to be sent to Suakin in connection with the operations against Osman Digma, and this he cordially disliked. The force was expected to remain in Suakin, making no advance. White, knowing India well, said the troops would regard themselves as "Kilaband," fort-bound, "which is a term of contempt among them," and would resent the position. Moreover, they were too few to be of real service. He refers more than once in his letters to this term Kilaband; and when, three years later, he found himself shut up

in Ladysmith, he thought with bitterness of the effect which would be created in India by the news.

The remainder of the season passed off with nothing more remarkable than hard work upon the unending question of mobilisation, and one of White's many falls. His horse reared and came over with him, afterwards kicking and cutting his face. But he was very "fit," owing to the hard exercise of which his letters are full, and the accident did him no harm beyond leaving a scar.

Early in 1897, his last year as Commander-in-Chief, White heard that his son had passed into Sandhurst, which was a pleasure to him. He decided, after consideration, to put the boy into his own regiment if possible. British infantry, he said, afforded ample opportunity for service in India — even too much. He might well say so, for he had spent in the Indian Empire three-quarters of his service.

Throughout his term as Commander-in-Chief White had entertained on a lavish scale. Lady White thoroughly enjoyed this part of a Commander-in-Chief's duties, and helped him well, extending the hospitality of Snowdon not only to those on the "Government House list," but to the tradespeople of Simla, the wives and children of soldiers, and others who had been known to her before her marriage. But liberal entertaining inevitably costs money, and not for the first time White was now becoming somewhat anxious as to his future life in England. His Irish property was bringing him about half what it used to bring, and there seemed to be no prospect of any satisfactory appointment at home. It is an

anxiety which comes sooner or later to most men who serve in India, where there lingers even now a faint trace of the reckless traditions of last century; and White's letters begin to revert more and more frequently to the subject.

The lull in the North-West Frontier troubles was not of long duration. In the summer of 1897 there were serious fanatical risings both on the Chitral road and further south in the neighbourhood of the Tochi Pass, while attacks were threatened at other points. Finally the Afridis, the leading tribe on the Frontier, broke into revolt in the Khyber Pass, which they had undertaken to keep open for trade, and it became necessary to punish them. The position was complicated by the doubtful behaviour of the Amir's troops in rear of the tribes. White had no doubt that they were encouraging the malcontents, if not giving them active help. The result was that, to restore order along the whole line, he had to put into the field more than sixty thousand men.

For the conduct of the main operation—the advance into the difficult Afridi country of Tirah, hitherto unvisited by any conqueror—White's choice fell upon Sir William Lockhart, who had now been nominated to succeed him as Commander-in-Chief. He had offered to go himself, but the Government of India thought this undesirable. After some sharp fighting at Dargai and elsewhere Lockhart occupied Tirah, to the great astonishment of the Afridis, who were wont to boast that even Secunder Rumi, Alexander the Great, had been forced to pay them for his passage through the Khyber. The "purdah"

of the tribe had now been raised for the first time in history.

It may be well to note here that White had, somewhat against Lockhart's wishes, given the command of a division in the force to Penn Symons, who had worked so well for him in Burma. Symons, White wrote, was "the most competent man in India (British or Indian Services) to command an Infantry Division." And after the expedition Lockhart's verdict was: "No one could have done better." Departing from his principles about his staff, White also gave a chance of service to his Aide-de-Camp "Ronnie" Brooke, to whom he lent his own poshteen for the expedition. And he appointed to the command of a brigade his former military secretary, Ian Hamilton, in whose place he had selected Lieut.-Col. Beauchamp Duff, regarding him as "the most promising officer in the Indian Staff Corps." I see that White writes to his brother about Hamilton a little earlier:—

> I shall miss him very much. I speak more freely to him than to anyone else. He is also clever and very sympathetic, and lets me blow off steam to him when I am in a rage, which makes a friend a great safety-valve.

White, who, as I have shown before, was originally opposed to any forward policy beyond our frontier, had now become a convert, and indeed the leading exponent of a policy of "thorough" in our dealings with the border tribes. He strongly advocated the retention of Tirah, and before leaving Simla at the close of the season he made, at a farewell dinner given

to him, a speech in which he boldly stated his opinion that our aim should be, not only in Tirah but throughout the North-West Frontier tract, to pursue "a policy of closer control and disarmament." The speech caused much comment both in India and in England.

In the meantime Lord Lansdowne, who was now at the War Office, had offered White, who was supposed to be leaving India in November 1897, the post of Quartermaster-General at the Horse Guards. His letter was as follows:—

Aug. 11, 97.

MY DEAR WHITE,—We have corresponded very little since we parted in India, and it is all the more delightful to me to write you a letter confirming the telegram in which you will be asked to join the Head Quarters Staff of the Army, and to become, therefore, once more my official colleague.

It has no doubt been made clear to you that there can be no question of depriving India of your services until they can be spared. If Lord Elgin wishes to keep you for a time, we can make an *ad interim* arrangement for the performance of the Q.M.G.'s duties. You may perhaps find them somewhat tame and uneventful after your work in India; but there can be no doubt as to their importance, and your Indian experience will be of great use to you and to us.

I may tell you without breach of confidence that when I submitted your name to the Queen she expressed her entire approval of the selection, and that I was able to tell H.M. that it was thoroughly favoured by Lord Wolseley.

I hope you may be as pleased as we are at the W.O., and that what has been done will be agreeable to Lady White.

We must manage a khud[1] walk, or the nearest approach

[1] A khud is a ravine or mountain-side. Lord Lansdowne enjoyed a stiff uphill walk in the Himalayas as much as White did.

to it possible, in Wiltshire or elsewhere (St James St. is hardly steep enough) when you return.

Meanwhile, believe me, my dear White, yours sincerely,

LANSDOWNE.

White accepted the appointment. He did not like office work, of which he had had much during his time as Commander-in-Chief, but there was nothing else to be done, and the fact that Lord Lansdowne was at the War Office made a great difference.

You doubted my acceptance [he writes to his sister], but though I hate London, I am too poor to refuse £2000 a year, and if I find the work and place intolerable, I must only make the best bargain I can, and cut it.

Meanwhile he had become a Grand Cross of the Bath. His brother congratulated him, but said something about a baronetcy, to which White replied that there was not the slightest chance of such a thing, "and it would do me no good or Jack either." Soon after his arrival in Calcutta he received another Grand Cross—that of the Star of India. He writes to his sister:—

TREASURY GATE, FORT WILLIAM,
13*th January* 98.

I had no notion anything was in the air, & considered I had been sufficiently well done with the G.C.B. . . . I have to go through a heavy ceremonial of Investiture this evening. I enter in the robes & insignia of G.C.I.E. I then have to leave the Chapter, unrobe, & come in for investiture as G.C.S.I. Always feel rather a fool, but shall be in good company to-night. . . .

After the successful termination of the Tirah campaign, Sir William Lockhart, who was not in good health, wanted leave to recruit, and White, who had hoped to get away in the cold weather, agreed to stay until April. He was, he said, strong and well, "and gallop three horses every morning." He galloped one a little too fast or too far; for as he was riding in a paper-chase early in February, his horse came down at the last wall and broke White's leg badly in seven places. When he did bring his term as Commander-in-Chief to an end, he was carried on board ship. It was a characteristic end. Lord Roberts had finished his career in India by going out pig-sticking, and killing the boar that wounded Sir Pertab Singh. White finished his by racing "a lot of boys" over stiff made jumps, and trying to cut down his own aide-de-camp. But neither Irishman fought the worse, or thought the less deeply, for loving a gallop.

The following letter from Lord Elgin may perhaps fitly conclude this chapter:—

GOVT. HOUSE, BARRACPORE,
March 13th, 1898.

I am much gratified by what you say of our work together here. Many a time have I congratulated myself on having you, in every sense of the term, at my right hand in Council. And there is one thing I have desired to say more publicly than in a private letter, but Fate seems against us at present. People talk of the Viceroy & Council having been captured by the military Members, and committed to a career of military enterprise and aggression. The proper policy to be adopted by the Govt. is fair subject for discussion, & we have sometimes been obliged

to agree to differ, but I shall always maintain that when it was a question of peace or war, the first voice for peace, where it could be honourably secured, was that of the C.-in-C. . . .

White's long course of preparation for the ordeal of his life had now come to a close. He had borne the Queen's Commission for nearly forty-five years. During thirty of those years he had served as a regimental officer, in peace and war, and had gained a thorough knowledge of the British soldier. The later part of his service had brought him valuable experience in matters lying outside the scope of regimental duty. He had seen something of staff work; he had taken a leading part in the conquest and pacification of a country larger than Great Britain; he had studied frontier affairs on the spot, both to the east and west of India; finally, he had commanded an army of three hundred thousand men, and become closely acquainted with the policy and internal working of the Indian Empire. He was nearly sixty-three years of age, and had not wholly escaped his share of illness and accident; but he carried his years lightly, and both in body and mind was well trained for any emergency that might come upon him.

END OF VOL. I.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF TH

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

00023143

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018